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STORY
OF
STORIES

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MARY AND JESUS AND THE INFANT JOHN.

After the Fresco by Bernardino Luini, in Lugano.

#14295

THE STORY OF STORIES

BY R. C. GILLIE

LONDON
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TO THE DEAR MEMORY
OF HER
WHO FIRST TOLD ME
THE STORY OF STORIES

P R E F A C E

THE aim of this book is to provide a Life of Christ which will be thoroughly attractive to children and at the same time will present the incidents of the sacred story in such a fashion that nothing will need to be unlearned in later years. For the sake of vividness, no attempt has been made to reproduce the whole of the material in the four Gospels, lest the central Figure should be blurred. Only the most important events and sayings, and those which appeal most directly to the minds of children, have been selected. For the sake of accuracy, unwarranted use of the imagination and of local colour has been avoided, and attention has

been directed to the beauty and power of our Lord's inner life.

The book differs from other Lives of Christ for children in two ways. First, a connected narrative and not a mere string of incidents is presented. The transitions in His life and the hinge-points of His ministry have been emphasised, so that every reader, however young, may in some measure understand how the idyll of Bethlehem could not but end in the tragedy and victory of Calvary. Secondly, while care has been taken to avoid theological terms, and always to use language which children at school can understand, an effort has been made to make plain the unique significance of the life of Jesus. He is described not only as the Carpenter of Nazareth, but also as the Saviour of the World. The glory which shines in all His words and deeds is explained, as His disciples explained it, by recognising Him as the Divine Lord.

I owe a debt of gratitude to a wide circle of authors for the aid their books have given me ; but my thanks are due especially to Mr. J. Carlton Stitt of Liverpool, for his assistance in choosing the illustrations and in securing accuracy in the descriptions of the Holy Land and its people ; and to my wife, for her numerous suggestions and criticisms, to which is largely due any value the book may possess.

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INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER I

WHAT JESUS WAS LIKE

HAVE you sometimes wondered what the Lord Jesus Christ was like when He was upon the earth? You have seen many pictures of Him and perhaps you have been a little puzzled, for although most of them bear a certain likeness to each other, they do not all show you quite the same face. You would like very much to know exactly how He looked.

But that we cannot know. We can only guess a little, and find out from books about the dress and appearance and habits of the people among whom He lived. Like other working folk in Palestine, He would wear a loose robe girt about the waist, and above this a cloak of coarser cloth. Probably His hair would be dark, unless it were

auburn, for most Jews have either dark or auburn hair, and, like His fellow-countrymen, He would wear it long and with a beard. We also know from the history of His life that He must have been strong and healthy, else He could not have endured such hard work nor at the last such sore suffering. And sometimes He had scarcely enough food and no place where to lay His head and rest.

But we cannot know His height, nor the colour of His eyes, nor the many other things which would help us to make a picture in our minds. We can only be sure that He was beautiful, for His soul must have shone through and made His face such as every child loves. Though He was still a young man when He began to go about the country with His disciples teaching men about their great Father in heaven, it is probable that His face was already lined, for Love and Compassion and Sorrow and Courage had always been His companions, and had left their marks, whereby men might see that here was One who understood them and was longing to comfort and to help.

I do not think we need be disappointed that we can be sure of no more than this, for if you stop to think, you will see that we know the most

important things about Him. We know what He thought and what He felt, why He was filled with anger or with joy, when He sighed and when He wept, and how He spoke to women and little children as well as to governors and wise men. From words He lets fall we discover that He watched the birds and the flowers and the rising and setting of the sun, and paused to listen to the voice of the wind, which came no one could tell whence, and made Him think of the mystery of God's Spirit working in the hearts of men. All this and much more is told us about Him, so that if He ever visited the earth again in the same fashion as long ago, His friends would be able to find and know Him although in the midst of many others.

For when you have been told exactly what a person looks like, and have even seen his portrait, you do not really know him. His real self—that is, his soul—shows itself in words and deeds. If your friend's face were much changed by some accident or illness, you would not feel that your friend was really changed. Or if some one looking like your friend should come and act unkindly and untruly, you would not be deceived. You know

the mind and heart of your friend, and would be quite sure that it was not he. Just in the same way we may know the mind and heart of Jesus Christ. We may read and learn what He loved and what He hated, what He did when He was tired or hungry or troubled, how He prayed and how He taught, how He died and how He came back from the dead.

This book is written to tell you many things about Him, so that you may begin to know Him even better than people whose faces you see and whose hands you touch. But it will take you all your life, and much longer, to understand the love and beauty and holiness that are in Him.

CHAPTER II

THE LAND WHERE JESUS LIVED

LET us go in imagination to the land where Jesus lived nineteen hundred years ago. We shall go by sea, and if the steamer travels quickly, it will take us at least seven days. Leaving London, we steam southwards, past France and Spain, the very names of which were unknown in the village where He lived. At the Straits of Gibraltar, which seemed to be the very ends of the earth to the timid sailors of that far-off time, we enter the blue Mediterranean and sail steadily eastwards day after day. Africa lies to the south, with its hot sunshine and far-stretching deserts; Italy and Greece, the homes of warriors and poets, lie to the north. At last we see before us a long, unbroken coast-line, without any large harbour or river-mouth for many miles, where the waves break

unceasingly in foam on sandy shores or at the foot of low cliffs. We must land here, for there is no more sea for thousands of miles in the direction in which we have gone. This is the shore of the Holy Land.

You can see at once that the people who live here are not likely to be great sailors. There are no islands to tempt them a little way out to sea. There are no harbours where ships can lie safely, however wild the storm. There were fishermen among the friends of Jesus, but they sailed on a little lake, only thirteen miles long and eight miles across at its widest part.

This land in which Jesus lived all His life is very small, not larger than Wales. You can easily sail along its whole coast-line between dawn and sunset if your vessel makes ten miles an hour. The distance right across it from the sea to the wide desert that shuts it in on the east is only about sixty miles—scarcely further than from Newcastle to Berwick. But it is full of variety. Different places in this little country vary as much in heat and cold as Norway and Italy. In the north there is a mountain called Hermon, which is almost always covered with snow. From its roots

down a deep valley rushes a river, falling lower and lower (hence its name Jordan, the descender) until it ends in the lake which we call the Dead Sea, the salt waters of which lie far below the surface of the ocean. In the trough where this river flows, which is in places lower than the bottom of our deepest coal-pit, it is almost as hot as in India, although the snowy mountain is not too far off to be seen.

Let us start from the seashore and travel due east, and you will see how varied this land is. First you come upon a level plain, with great fields of grain, and here and there a palm-tree. Soon the ground rises, and you find yourself among hills and valleys. It is less hot than in the plain, but if the hillsides were terraced as they used to be, vines would grow easily; and these trees with the dull green leaves are olives. A little farther on, still ascending, you reach uplands which are as high as our mountains. Here there are flocks of sheep, and the shepherd is glad to wear his sheep-skin coat at night, and sometimes the snow lies deep.

When we have crossed this high ground, we begin to descend very quickly, and soon are down in the deep valley of the Jordan, where the Arabs live

comfortably, although they dwell in tents and are usually clad in only a loose calico robe. Mounting from this hot valley and still going east, we climb swiftly another range of hills, where the Arabs say "the cold is always at home." It is like visiting Italy and England and Egypt, and yet you have only travelled a little farther than from London to Brighton.

Now, instead of walking from the west to the east, let us go northwards along this hilly ridge which lies between the wheatfields by the sea and the hot valley of the Jordan. This is the main portion of the province called Judæa. Lift your eyes and you see rough moorland stretching on every side. The roads are stony and the land is covered with rocks ; even where there are fields the stones are so thick that it seems hopeless to try to clear them away. There are no trees save a few dwarf oaks ; no streams, only here and there a deep cistern hewn out of the rock. It is a bare, dry land, where little corn will grow, and only sheep and goats can be happy. It is in the heart of this rough upland that the great city of Jerusalem lies.

But as we press towards the north the scene

changes, the valleys grow larger, the rocks disappear, and when we come to the midland province of Samaria, although the hills still lie round us and we are high above the sea, it is a fertile and beautiful country. Here the cows are famous for their milk, beautiful trees grow high, gardens are full of flowers and fruits. You can hear the murmur of little streams, the music of the birds, and, in its season, the nightingale's song.

When you have passed through these pleasant places and are come to the last hill-slopes, there lies stretched before you a wide plain, crossed by one or two low ridges. It is the one great plain in the Holy Land. In the days of Jesus, rich harvests of grain were reaped here, but now only rough grass grows in many places, and shows green and rank by the water-courses. Across this plain the caravans from Damascus to Egypt would pass, and every year herds of camels are driven through it to be sold in the south.

As we cross this plain we see the hills of Galilee rising before us. They are not bare and rough as the hills of Judæa were, but behind them are lofty peaks and deep and narrow glens, rising higher and higher to the great mountain of Lebanon,

where the mighty cedars used to grow. When the plain is left behind and we mount one of the first hills, there below us lies a little town, nestling in a green and sunny valley. That is Nazareth, where Jesus lived most of His life. Gardens and cornfields lie around it. Oaks and olive-trees grow where the ground is too stony for the corn. If we look from the hill-crest on which we stand, we can see the blue Mediterranean on the one hand, the snowy shoulders of Hermon on the other, and just twenty miles away lies the Lake of Galilee, where Jesus found His fisher friends. Here, amid the flowers and the birds, within sight of the great sea and the gleaming mountain, close to the plain along which the chariots flashed and the caravans wound, He spent His boyhood and youth. His shorter journeys would be to the lake to watch the fisher folk, and once or twice a year He would go to the sacred city, Jerusalem, a hundred miles away among the stony hills of Judæa.

This land, made up of these three little provinces of Judæa, Samaria, and Galilee, is called the Holy Land. It bears that name partly because the great God made Himself known to the



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NAZARETH AT THE PRESENT DAY.

From a Photograph.

Israelites who dwelt there. He taught them how to worship Him aright, and gave them clear commands and bright promises. It was as if the sun shone on Palestine, while all the other countries were lit only by the stars. But the chief reason why Palestine is called the Holy Land is, that God's dear Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, lived there. Other countries are more beautiful, and many are more wealthy, but no other was honoured by the presence of the Lord of Heaven.

CHAPTER III

THE PEOPLE AMONG WHOM JESUS LIVED

TRY and think of the far-off time when England was covered with forests and London was only a little village. Let us step back over the centuries and take our stand on the hill above the valley where Nazareth nestles, and look out over the scene which the child Jesus often looked on. At our feet runs one of the great roads from Damascus to Egypt. From the hill on the other side of the valley another road is seen from the seaport called Acre, to the busy cities on the Lake of Galilee. Up and down these and other great roads go the people whom Jesus knew. Watch them.

There goes a band of men who must be soldiers, for they are marching in order, with spears and armour gleaming in the sunlight. But they are not Jews. The standard with the figure of an

eagle perched upon it proclaims that they are Romans. Yes, Romans, for the Jews have nothing of their own. Many years before Jesus was born they were conquered, and now the great city of Rome is supreme over the land where David was once king. These soldiers march fearlessly, for they have rarely lost a battle; but their hands are never far from their short swords, for they know that many of the Jews hate them and sigh to be free.

But what makes this cloud of dust in the distance? As it comes nearer we see a chariot, richly decorated, driven like the wind. As it flashes past we catch a glimpse of a man in a robe of purple silk, and perhaps he leaves a breath of perfume in the air, for his garments are scented. He, too, is not a Jew. He is one of the Greeks who are found in such numbers in some of the cities of Galilee, and have set up their heathen temples, with statues of alluring goddesses, close to the simple meeting-houses where the Jews go for prayer and to hear their Bible.

And who are these, winding slowly along with camels heavily laden? This is a party of merchants on their way to the sea. Let us look into

their packages. Here are great bales of carpets, which have crossed many hundred miles of desert from Babylon where rich Jews live; boxes of dried fish from the Lake of Galilee, a delicacy for the rich men of Alexandria and Rome; and perhaps balsam from Jericho, which will be used for medicines or in embalming the dead. How different the drivers and traders in these caravans are from one another. Some are from the great seaport of Tyre, whence the famous sailors came; some are Arabs of the desert, who love their horses better than any human friend; and others of a darker complexion are from Egypt.

Perhaps you begin to think that there were more foreigners than Jews in Galilee when Jesus lived there. That was not so; but it is true that He did not grow up far away from the busy world. He was as close to it as if He lived in the outskirts of an English seaport town to-day. Indeed, He would see far more foreigners than an English boy sees at home. And yet this little town was quiet enough, and all who lived there were like Himself of the Jewish race.

Now let us turn out of the great plain where lie the vast wheatfields and the far-reaching roads,

and go up the crooked valley which opens out on Nazareth, and remember we are trying to imagine what it was like in the days of Jesus.

Let us watch the men as they go to work in the fields in the early morning, or take their seats in the little shops which are open to the street. Many of them wear only two garments—a shirt which falls nearly to the knees, and over it a kind of cloak or mantle, which they can use for a blanket at night if they are poor. The cloak is perhaps made in black and white stripes, and the shirt may be of blue or striped cotton. Their heads are bare, for their hair is long, and protects the brain and the neck from the sun. If they do wear a covering, it is made of a strip or square of cloth twisted together and folded loosely round the head. The broad girdle is very useful to them. It serves as purse and pocket and belt, for it is folded over and sewn in the front so that it forms a little bag.

At prayer-time you will see the strictest Jews bring out of their girdle two curious little leather boxes with straps. Each of these contains a strip of parchment with a few words from the Old Testament written on it. The one box they strap upon the left arm and the other on the forehead. It

seems ludicrous to us, but it was the regular custom then. Every Monday and Thursday and Saturday, when people met to pray in the Synagogue, Jesus would see many of these phylacteries as they were called, perhaps because they were thought to *guard* the wearers. They are simple, hard-working people, these fellow-citizens of Jesus, but they are all proud of their race and of their religion and of their land. Not one of them wishes to be a Roman soldier or a Greek merchant or an Arab trader. They believe themselves to be better and nobler than any other people, for is not the great and holy city of Jerusalem theirs, and are they not the favoured people of Jehovah, the God of the whole world ?

If we wish to see some of the proudest of the Jews, we must take our stand in a street in the Jerusalem of that day not far from the great Temple, in which Jesus so often spoke when He grew to be a man. Here is a Jew standing at the corner of the street, where every one can see him, with his head bent in prayer. There are long fringes to his robe, and he is wearing his phylacteries. Now he has finished his prayers, and as he walks homewards, see how careful he is not to

brush against any foreigner, for he thinks this might make him unclean and unfit to worship in the Temple later in the day.

This is one of the Pharisees, a word which means one who keeps himself separate. He is a very strict man, and much more particular about many little things than the Old Testament tells him to be. But he is also very proud; he loves to hear people whisper as he goes past, "That is a very pious man." He does not understand that what God desires most of all is a humble and loving heart. He thinks goodness consists in keeping all kinds of regulations about one's food and one's dress and the distance one may walk on the Sabbath. He looks down on every one that does not do as he does, and especially on people of other nations. It was men like this one who hated Jesus most, because He opposed their teaching and said that rules about outward things mattered little. Besides, He told them to their face that many were hypocrites.

But notice those two others who walk along proudly and disdainfully. They are Jews, but how richly they are dressed. They are not afraid of foreigners, for they stop to chat with some gay

followers of Herod's court. They do not trouble about keeping little rules. Perhaps you think they are better than the Pharisees. But watch how they frown when that roughly dressed peasant does not move quickly out of their way. See how they sneer a little at some earnest worshippers in the Temple, although they themselves are priests. They care much more about money and position than about true religion. These men belong to the party called Sadducees. We do not quite know what the name means or why they received it. They, too, hated Jesus, for although they did not mind His opposition to the Pharisees, they were very jealous of any one who loved the common people and cared nothing for those who were priests and rich and aristocratic unless they were really good.

These then were the people among whom Jesus lived. Their dress and their languages, their homes and their manners, were very different from ours. But we are like them in many ways. If we learn how Jesus lived with them, and taught them, and died for them, we shall be able to understand why He came to earth, and what He would have us do, and, most of all, how much He loves each one of us.

CHAPTER IV

HOW GOD MADE THE WORLD READY FOR HIS SON

WHEN you read the story of the birth of the Lord Jesus, you may think at first that God had not made any preparations when He sent His well-beloved Son to be a man upon the earth. For, as you will hear, when Jesus was born, not even a cradle was ready for Him, and He had to be laid in a manger. His mother was so poor, too, that she could not make the ordinary sacrifice which most mothers made in the Temple. And although the shepherds and the wise men from abroad came to see Him, the priests and the nobles of the Jews took no notice of Him. It does seem at first sight as if the world had not been ready for its Saviour. But that was not so. God had been preparing for centuries for the going forth of His Son to earth. Everything was quite ready. It was "the fulness of time."

First of all, a nation—the nation of the Jews—had been taught a great deal about the true God, and had come to believe in Him. All the other nations worshipped idols, or gods and goddesses, or the sun in the sky, but the Jews had forsaken their idols, and knew that there was only one God. They had taken a long time to learn this. They would not believe God's prophets until they were conquered and taken away from their own land. Then they finally gave up idols, and some were allowed to return.

This happened more than five hundred years before Jesus was born, but they were not ready to receive Him then. They were still too proud and self-confident. They had not begun to long for a great deliverer, and they had not gathered together the sacred books which make up our Old Testament: indeed these were not all written. So more prophets were sent, and the land was conquered again and again, until at last all Jews hated idols, and they had a Bible from which they could learn how good and holy God was. They also understood from the sacrifices they were taught to offer, and from the rebukes of the prophets, what sin meant, and how hateful it was in God's sight. They longed, too,

for the Deliverer promised to them, whom they called the Messiah, the Anointed One, or, in the Greek language, "the Christ." And when He began to teach the people, He did not need to begin at the very beginning, as He would have had to do with idol worshippers; and they were eager to listen to Him, thinking He might be the great Deliverer they sought.

It is sad to hear how in the end the nation rejected Him; but a few of the noblest and truest souls were faithful to Him, and through them the good news of God's love was taken to the heathen nations. If there had not been some among the Jews ready to receive our Lord and able to understand a little of His teaching, He would have been like a spring in the desert, all the waters of which vanish in the sand for lack of a channel to retain them.

But this was not the whole of God's preparation. You know that the Romans were the rulers of Palestine. They had conquered many other countries as well. From the north of France to the north of Africa, and from Spain to Palestine was in their hands. Wherever they went they made great roads, and protected travellers against

robbers, and would not allow the different nations to fight against each other. Thus it was much easier for people to travel to foreign lands and to settle in foreign cities than in former days; and many Jews had become merchants outside Palestine. Some were in Greece, some in Egypt, and some in Rome itself. They came as often as they could to Jerusalem, where was the great Temple, the only Temple in which they ever worshipped. There they heard all the news, and told it when they returned. Thus anything which was known in Jerusalem became quickly known in other lands.

You can see, then, how the conquest of the world by the Romans had prepared the way for the work Jesus came to do. He Himself lived all His life in Palestine, but He became a man because He loved all men, and He wished His disciples to preach about Him in every land. If He had come only two hundred years earlier, it would have been very difficult for them to travel. They would have been the first Jews to enter many towns, and would not have known where or how to preach. But when He did at last come, the smooth roads were ready for His messengers. They were comparatively safe under the Roman

rule, and in many cities there were little Jewish meeting-houses where they were sure to find some ready to listen to their message. How little the Roman emperors and generals and engineers thought that they were making it easy for the work of God's Son to be done swiftly and well, when they were winning battles and building bridges and leading their straight roads across mountain and valley. They were all tools in God's hands.

In one other way God made preparation before Jesus was born. You know that our missionaries often take years before they can preach in the language of the people to whom they go. If the disciples of Jesus had had to learn a new language in every country, their message would have been told very slowly and imperfectly. But this was not necessary. For a century and more before the birth of Jesus, one language had become common in most of the countries round the Mediterranean Sea. Greece was only a small country, but into whatever town one went, whether in Palestine or Italy or North Africa, many people would be met who could speak and understand Greek. Jesus' own name was Greek in its form, the Hebrew

word being Joshua. The Hebrew Bible had been translated into Greek, and some Jews could only read it in this language. Most of the chief friends of Jesus were able to speak and write Greek. So wherever they went, they preached and wrote and taught in Greek, and were always understood. And the books of our New Testament, although many of them were written to different Churches in different countries, were all written in Greek. So while God was making ready a nation of missionaries in one country to tell the good news, He was providing that the other countries should learn a language through which the good news would be quickly understood.

This is ever God's way. His work which we do not see is often greater than that which we can see.

BOOK I

THE BIRTH AND CHILDHOOD OF
JESUS

CHAPTER V

HOW THE ANGEL GABRIEL APPEARED IN THE TEMPLE

IN a little town in Judæa lived a priest named Zacharias and his wife Elizabeth. They were both people who thought a great deal about God and how He loved best to be served. They were not like the Pharisees, who believed God was most pleased with the keeping of a great many little rules which did not really matter. They had lived good, unselfish lives, and had been able to learn the will of God more and more clearly because their hearts were pure and humble. They spent their time between their home in this little city and the great Jerusalem, whither Zacharias went in his turn with other priests to perform his office in the Temple.

But though they loved and feared God, and

God loved them, they had one great desire which He had never satisfied. Every day for many years Elizabeth and Zacharias had prayed that they might have a dear little child to care for, and who in turn would care for them in their old age. But old age had almost come and they were still alone. They had begun to believe that this was God's will for them, and the old prayer had ceased to be upon their lips. Elizabeth's heart must have been sad sometimes, but there would be no bitterness in her sadness, though she must have felt how good it would have been for her husband to have a young, strong arm to lean upon when his own steps should grow feebler.

Then came a day when a great honour was laid upon Zacharias.

Only once in his whole life was a priest allowed to go into the Holy Place to offer incense, and every day a new one was chosen by lot, for there were a great many priests. This time the lot fell to Zacharias.

A multitude of people were worshipping in the Temple, and for the first and last time in his life Zacharias stood alone before the altar and seven-branched candlestick to perform this sacred duty.

And as he waited, full of awe and reverence, and the Holy Place was filled with the strange, sweet fragrance of the incense, God sent him a wonderful vision.

The veil that hides the unseen was withdrawn, and at the right of the altar, through the thin blue smoke that rose slowly to the roof, he saw an angel. He was seized with wonder and fear. The angel spoke to him, saying, "Fear not, Zacharias, thy prayer is heard," and then told him that God would send Elizabeth a son, who would be a joy not only to themselves but to others, for he should turn many to God. He should "make ready a people prepared for the Lord." The angel did not forget to say what the child's name was to be—John, which means the "favour of God."

But though Zacharias longed for nothing so much as this, he could not trust his own senses. Was this a dream? Was it really a message from the great God of Israel, granting his desire even in his old age? And we can imagine how his voice faltered as he asked, "Whereby shall I know this?" The answer must have come in a sterner tone: "I am Gabriel, that stand in the presence of God," said the angel, "and am sent to speak unto thee, to

show thee these glad tidings. And, behold, thou shalt be dumb, and not able to speak, until the day that these things shall be performed, because thou believest not my words, which shall be fulfilled in their season."

Outside the Holy Place the people were waiting, and wondering what kept the priest so long. And when at length he came, he could not speak, but there was something in his face which showed them that he had beheld a vision from that other greater world. It must have been fear and wonder and reverence and joy that they saw there, for even the punishment that had been sent was only a reminder of the reality of the glad tidings. We wonder how he told Elizabeth. He must have written it for her to read, and have longed to speak and describe to her that wonderful angel.

But if Elizabeth was filled with gladness at the hope of the little child, a much greater joy lay in that further promise. Every day she must have repeated to herself those words of the angel Gabriel, "to make ready a people prepared for the Lord." Deep in her heart, as in the heart of every Jew, was a longing for that all-powerful Deliverer whose coming had been foretold by many prophets. But

she and Zacharias were among the few who looked not so much for a champion who would drive the conquering Romans into the sea, as for one who would lead Israel in the way of holiness. For them the great sorrow was not only that their dear land of Israel was in the hands of strangers, but also that sin had still so deadly a hold upon the souls of God's chosen people. And now Elizabeth knew that she would have a son who would not indeed be the champion of the nation, but he would prepare the way. He would be the morning star that shines before the coming of the day. To know that he was to be born, meant that the time could not be long before their beloved nation was free and pure once more.

CHAPTER VI

HOW THE GOOD NEWS CAME TO MARY

AMONG the green hills of Galilee, in the town of Nazareth, lived a maiden whose name was Mary, and who was a cousin of Elizabeth. She, too, knew and loved the stories of her nation, and had often heard how God had sent great leaders when Israel was in need. Very soon she was to be married to Joseph, who was a good man and a carpenter in the village. She loved little children, and it seems that she often thought upon the beautiful story of Samuel and his mother, and how he taught and saved his nation. But I do not think she ever imagined so high and glorious an honour as to be the mother of the Messiah could be hers. She knew that when He came He would be the greatest of her race, and she was but a humble and simple village maiden. That honour

was surely for some stately daughter of Jerusalem, perhaps the daughter of the High Priest.

But again God's angel stood revealed to human sight, and this time it was to the pure eyes of Mary that the vision was granted. Was she in the fields, I wonder, in the quiet of the evening, or busy about her work in the dewy freshness of the morning, or just waking from sleep on her pallet bed, as one great painter has pictured it? We cannot tell. It must have been out of a great stillness that the salutation of reverence and of joy was spoken by Gabriel, who stands ever in the presence of God. "Hail, thou that art highly favoured, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women."

What wonder that her humble soul was troubled at such a greeting. Yet no distrust was there. "Fear not, Mary," said the angel, calling her by her own familiar name, "for thou hast found favour with God." And then was unfolded the strange and wonderful message: "Behold thou shalt have a son, and shalt call His name Jesus. He shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of His kingdom there shall be no end." How many questions we fain would

ask. How much more Mary must have longed to know. "Why was she chosen?" What would people say?" "How would her child be received?"

But before some of the most holy and beautiful things God puts a veil of reverence. I think Mary felt this. One question only did she ask. We can hear it breathed out of the awe and bewilderment of the moment. "How can this be?" We can hear, too, the wonderful answer granted to the question because it was reverent and sincere, prompted by no unworthy thought—such questions always find their answers—"The power of the Most High shall overshadow thee; wherefore the Holy Thing which is to be born shall be called the Son of God." Ah, Mary, how the sun must have shone for thee that day! how wonderful a place God's world must have seemed to thee, as the meaning of the angel's message for thy nation and for the whole world sank deeper and deeper into thy lowly heart!

One can imagine with what eagerness Mary would read again all that had been written of the Messiah who was to be her son. The old words she had often heard in the Synagogue, and the new words of the angel, would mean so much more

as the time went on. "They shall call His name Emmanuel, God with us." "He shall save His people from their sins." "Of His kingdom there shall be no end." How much did she understand of it all? We do not know; but as she brooded and prayed, the longing came to her for some one with whom to talk over this strange and beautiful secret.

She did not choose one of the village maidens. How could she? How could they understand? Nor Joseph, who was to be her husband—dear and revered though he was, she could not feel sure at first that he would understand. There was only one, her cousin, the old Elizabeth who lived among the uplands of Judæa. The angel had told Mary that this cousin was to have a son too, after so many years of childlessness; a son who was given by God to do a peculiar work. She also had had a wonderful revelation of God's power and love. She would understand.

So Mary set forth, and journeyed across the plain and through the hills, and came to Elizabeth's house. What a welcome she received! And at once she found that she did not need to tell her secret, but that her old friend knew it already, because God had whispered it to her.

As Mary heard her cousin's loving voice, and was able to speak for the first time of the great joy that the future held, her heart broke out into song. The song of Samuel's mother, which Mary had so often murmured to herself, took new shape on her lips, and she cried, "My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour. For He hath regarded the low estate of His handmaiden : for, behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed."

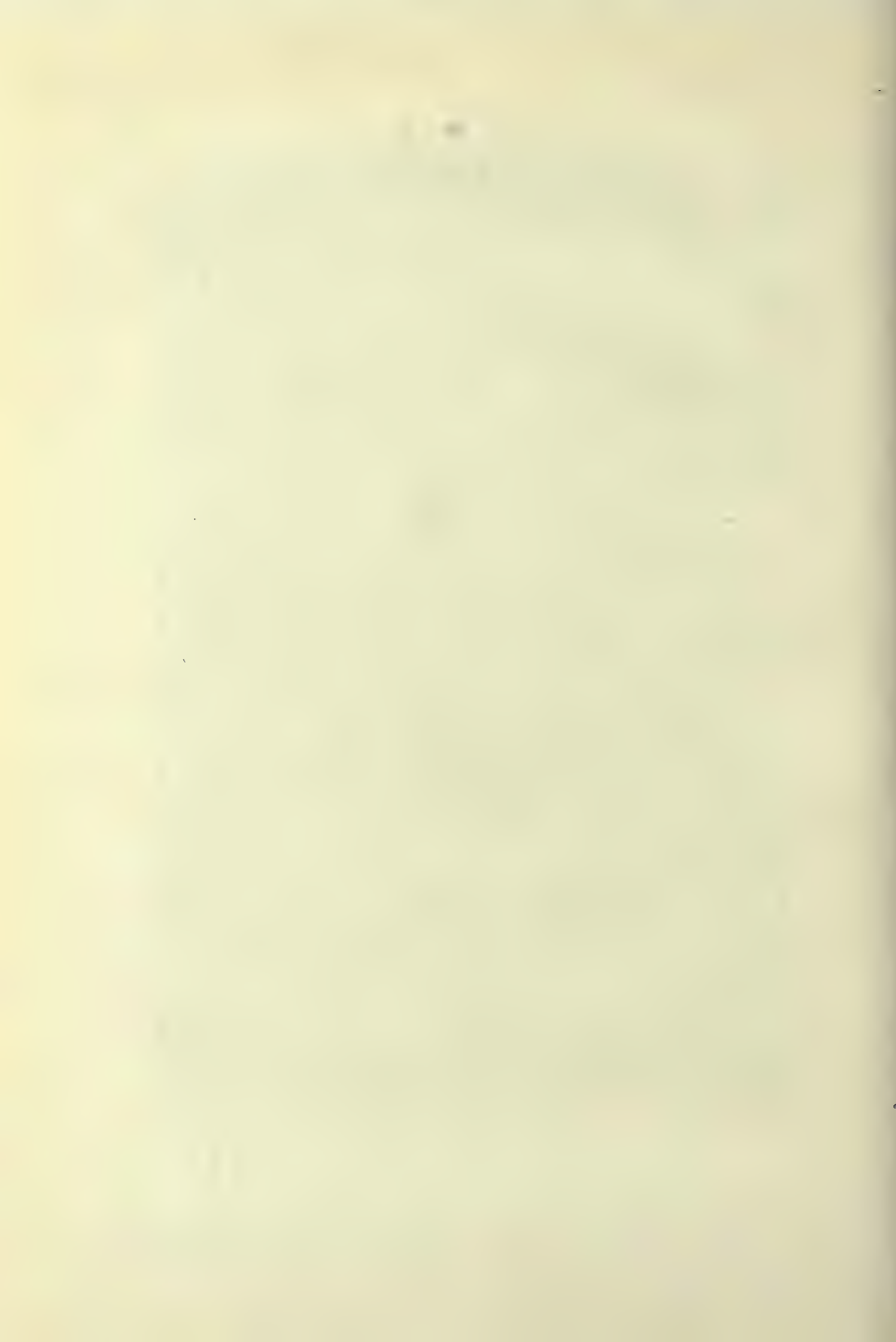
Three months Mary stayed with Elizabeth, and then she turned back to Nazareth, for her marriage day drew near. All was made easy for her. Joseph had learned by a vision that she who was to be his wife would have a child who would not be his son, but a gift to the world from the great God. So she did not have to tell him her secret, but found him ready to cherish her and to watch over her. Thus the glad tidings were at first made known only to three people, and to them because they were so humble and pure that God could trust them with it. They knew it when all the kings and captains and rich men of the earth knew it not. Perhaps they knew it as soon as the angels of heaven.



Atinari.

THE MEETING OF ELIZABETH AND MARY.

From the Picture by Albertinelli in the Uffizi Gallery, Florence.



CHAPTER VII

HOW THE GOOD NEWS CAME TO MEN

ONE day, just about six months after Mary had said farewell to Elizabeth, a man and woman were seen entering the little town of Bethlehem just before sunset. They were very tired, for they had come far, and both carried bundles. The man had his tools and some food, and the woman some clothes tied together. These were Joseph and Mary. Before them lay an inn, built round a courtyard, and here they were hoping to rest. It would not be like the little home in Nazareth, for the rooms in Eastern inns were without furniture; but at least it would be a shelter from the night wind and a place of safety. As they drew near, Mary's heart sank, for the courtyard was full of the asses of other travellers, and the recesses round about were crowded with people. There was no

room for Joseph and Mary here, and they turned away to find what resting-place they might.

From all parts of Palestine the Jews were flocking to their ancestral cities. The Emperor of Rome had commanded that all his subjects should be registered, so that they might be more easily taxed. It was the Jewish custom that each citizen should be registered in the city of his forefathers. Thus others like Joseph had found their way to Bethlehem, because their families had originally belonged to it. Most likely it was these wayfarers who filled the inn.

Mary, who was ready to sink to the ground with weariness, was glad at last to take shelter in the corner of a stable where a stall was vacant and a manger empty. It was a cheerless place, perhaps only a cave in the rock. Asses and oxen would be their companions, but at least there was a roof over their heads; and gentle Mary, dazed and frightened with the hubbub of the inn, was glad to find a refuge away from the crowd. She did not fear the patient beasts of burden, but surely her heart was heavy with strangeness and weariness and pain.

There were some that night who had no roof at

all over their heads. Out on the high, wide hills round Bethlehem lay scattered groups of shepherds watching by their flocks. The sheep were all in their fields, but guard must be kept, for wolves and foxes were not far off, and in the cold and the dark were fierce for lack of food. So the shepherds drew their sheepskin cloaks about them and kept watch through the starlit night.

The men who made up one group were different from all the others. They were, I think, better and more thoughtful men. They did not spend the long hours merely in counting their money or in telling stories of wonders. In the stillness of the night their thoughts turned to the God of their fathers, who hated iniquity and loved righteousness, and they wondered when He would send the mighty Messiah to save His people. Perhaps they sometimes repeated the shepherd psalm, which they had been told was written by a shepherd lad of Bethlehem, who was afterwards King David. "The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: He leadeth me beside the still waters." They never dreamed that they would be the first to

hear the good news of the coming of the great Shepherd of souls.

The early hours of the night passed like so many others that filled their memories. But suddenly the familiar scene was transformed. The darkness about them was flooded with a great glory of light, and in the heart of it they saw an angel. Then, as panic seized them and a trembling wonder, the angel's voice spoke to reassure: "Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day, in the city of David, a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger." And then, more wonderful still, round about the angel shone a host of heavenly beings, crying, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men."

Not in the golden Temple which Herod had raised in Jerusalem, not to the High Priest nor to a Pharisee, had the great news been told, but out by the sheepfolds on the bare hillside and to simple shepherds. Where could have been found a temple more fit for this message of wonder and



THE COMING OF THE CHRIST-CHILD.

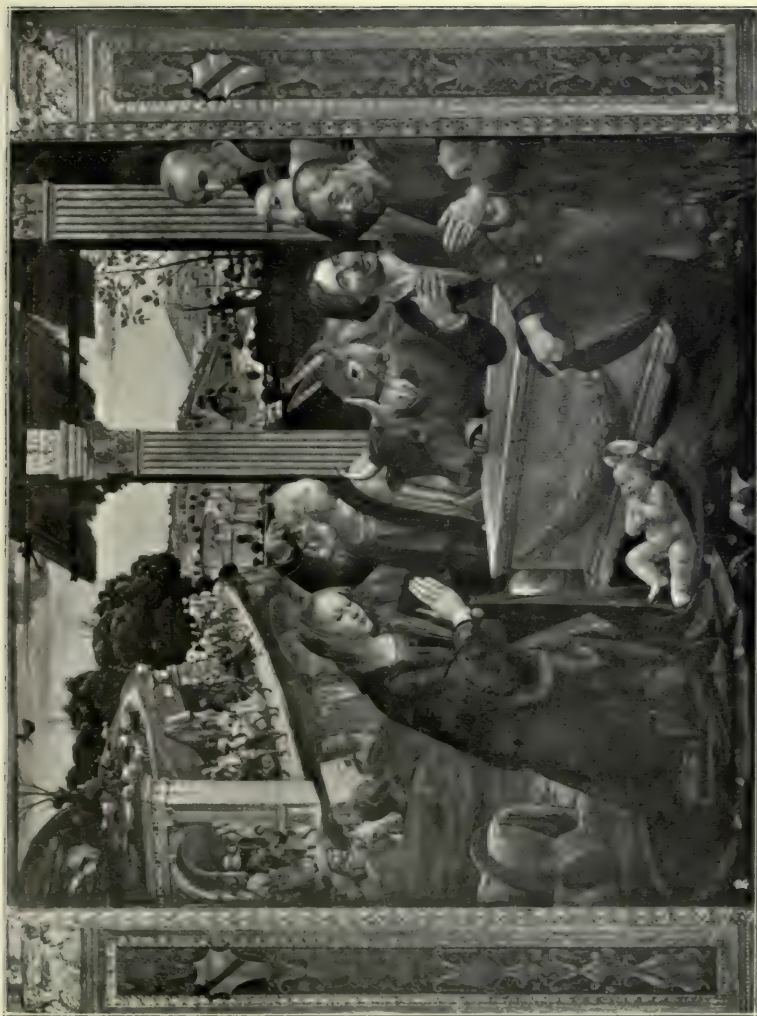
From the Picture by Botticelli in the National Gallery, London.

joy than the starlit church of the hills? And what a message it was! "Unto you is born a Saviour"—that is, one who should stand between them and danger. These lonely shepherds knew well what danger meant. Besides the dangers of darkness and precipices and wild beasts and storms, they knew the dangers of their own souls. For even here, in this quiet country life, jealousy and rage and dishonesty were hard to conquer. But a Saviour was coming! And for their poor country too, downtrodden and oppressed by Gentiles as it was, a Saviour was coming, the Anointed One spoken of by the prophets. Best of all, He was near at hand, in Bethlehem, the little city of David which lay below them, where the lights had shone in the twilight. There, as the prophets had foretold, He was to be found.

And when the great glory had faded, and the wonderful voices died away, we can imagine how these men spoke together in awed whispers, and then hastened away through the dim night to find their Lord. There was no loitering by the way, and their eager feet soon stood beside that manger where, as the angel had declared, lay a little babe wrapped in swaddling clothes—the first dress of

a new-born infant. What a tale was this they had to tell! Most people did not believe it, and many thought it a dream. But Mary kept it in her heart, and pondered it lovingly as she hushed her little child to sleep, or watched Him smile, and felt His little hand upon her cheek.

And if one of these shepherds had little children, can you imagine how often they would listen to their father's beautiful story, and pour out eager questions about the baby king and the angel host? Was there a beating of mighty wings in the midst of the light? What was the music of that joyful song? How much you and I would like to know.



Androm.

THE SHEPHERDS ADORING.

From the Picture by Ghirlandajo in the Academy, Florence.

CHAPTER VIII

THE FIRST VISIT OF JESUS TO THE TEMPLE

THE Jews had been taught that the first-born boy in every family belonged specially to God, and it was a law that the parents should present their child solemnly in the Temple and acknowledge God's right to him by paying to the priests five silver coins called shekels—a sum equal to fifteen shillings. We have a still more beautiful thought now, for we feel that not only the oldest boy in our families, but all the little babies whom our Father sends to love and bless us, belong to Him. Therefore they are brought, whether boys or girls, while yet little and unconscious, to be acknowledged as God's very own in the beautiful sacrament of baptism.

So when Jesus was a little more than a month old He was taken on His first journey. They had not

far to go, for Joseph had apparently found work at Bethlehem, and had made his home there for a while. From Bethlehem to Jerusalem it is only six miles, and in the fresh spring air Jesus would sleep peacefully in His mother's arms until the great city was reached. How proud she would be of her beloved child as she stood at the top of the fifteen steps leading to the priests' enclosure, into which no woman might enter, and waited to be sprinkled with the blood of the sacrifice she had brought, according to the time-honoured custom of her people.

The Jewish law said the sacrifice which a mother ought to make after a little child was born was a lamb and a turtle-dove, but if poor, only two turtle-doves or young pigeons were asked. Joseph was just a working carpenter, and found it hard to save money, so Mary could only afford to bring the two birds as her offering. Then the five shekels were paid to the priest, as a sign that Jesus belonged to God as well as to Joseph and Mary. How little did the priest know that Jesus belonged to the great Father as no other little child on earth did, that He was indeed God's Son, and had come to do God's work.

I wonder what the other worshippers thought



Hempstead.

THE PRESENTATION IN THE TEMPLE.

From the Picture by Mantegna in the Berlin Gallery.

as they saw the young mother with her little child nestling in her arms, and her husband at her side carrying the cage of turtle-doves? Perhaps some said, "How poor our land grows! See, another mother cannot afford to offer a lamb, though her husband is a sturdy working man." They did not know that this was the wealthiest and noblest woman in all the land, and that she carried in her arms a gift so rich that the wisest men had never imagined such would be found in our sinful world.

But there were two old people who spent much of their time in the Temple, and who had the heavenly vision. See that old man with the white hair and stooping shoulders, and eyes which look far away, seeing glories beyond the glories of the Temple, but seeing also the shameful and sorrowful things which made the city dark. This is Simeon. For many years he had prayed that deliverance might come to his nation, and once while he prayed the hope sprang in his heart that he would see the Messiah before he died. He was very old now, and sometimes he trembled lest death should come too soon. That morning he had been drawn to the Temple with the thought that God would grant him his heart's desire. As

his eyes fell on Mary and the little child, at once he knew quite certainly that this was no other than the Hope of Israel. Coming close to the little group, he held out his arms for the child, and with such a glad reverence shining in his face that Mary, without fear, trusted her treasure to him.

While Joseph and she stood marvelling, he murmured strange and lovely words, like twilight music, over that beautiful baby face: "Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace, according to Thy word: for mine eyes have seen Thy salvation, . . . a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of Thy people Israel." The old man raised a trembling hand to bless Mary and her husband, but even as he spoke, the sunlight seemed to fail around them, for he said, "This child is set . . . for a sign which shall be spoken against; yea, a sword shall pierce thy own soul also." Poor Mary, how soon the prophecy of sadness concerning her child's lot began; how early the shadow of her great sorrow crept over her! I think she almost snatched her baby from the old man's arms and pressed him to her breast in sudden terror.

Just then another old and reverend figure came up to them. It was Anna, an aged woman of

eighty-four. She had only known seven years of happy married life, and had spent her long widowhood praying and fasting, both by night and day, for the good of her nation. She seems to have known Simeon, and I suppose they had often talked of their great hope. She, too, gave God thanks that at last the Deliverer was come, and till her death spoke to her friends, whose eyes were also fixed upon the future, of the little child with the mysterious, all-commanding gaze.

Thus the infant Jesus was blessed and welcomed by the aged, as He had been blessed and welcomed by the angels. And whenever we see a little child in an old man's embrace, it is a picture of Hope ; for since our dear Lord came, we know that the old will be made young in another world, and that however long the winter of fear and suspense last, the springtime of Life and Victory will come at last.

CHAPTER IX

HOW THE STAR LED THE WISE MEN

WHEN Jesus was born, the governor of Jerusalem was not a Roman as in His later years, but a king who had been allowed by the Romans to rule over the Jews. His forefathers came from the country of Edom, with which the Israelites had often been at war. He was one of the most cruel and wicked men who ever lived, but to make himself acceptable to the Jews, he had built a new and magnificent temple for them in Jerusalem. He was beyond measure jealous of any one who seemed to be depriving him of a fragment of his power. Imagine then into what a state of mind he was thrown when one day three strangers from the East entered Jerusalem, inquiring for the newborn king of the Jews. Was not he the King of the Jews? Neither child nor grandchild had been

born to him of late. What could this strange question mean? Through the city the story passed from mouth to mouth. Was there to be a new king? Would he deliver them from oppression? But was it good that Herod should lose his throne? for, with all his faults, he had lavished money on the Temple. Would there be warfare and more bloodshed?

But who were these strangers who had thus disturbed the court and city of Jerusalem? Sometimes on a summer evening when you could not sleep, or on a winter night when the snow covered the earth, you have gone to your window and gazed into the sky, and seen the stars shining like millions of eyes, and have wondered what they were. In the East, where there are no clouds for months together, the stars shine even more brightly; and long before telescopes were invented, men watched them and studied their movements. They fancied that certain stars were connected with different countries, and that from them might be learnt the fate of nations. Sometimes, too, they tried to guess of great men's lives from the appearance of the stars at their birth. Many only wished to gain money and fame by this

knowledge, but some were nobler. They hungered to read truth and beauty and the meaning of life in the skies. Such were these strangers. They had spent long days studying their ancient books, and sleepless nights watching the heavens.

When one night they saw what appeared to be a new star, it was put into their hearts that a king was born to the conquered Jews, and that He was to be a world-wide blessing. God, who is pitiful to all who seek the truth, was leading them to the secret of true knowledge. They gathered together some of their most precious possessions, golden ornaments and costly spices and perfumes, and journeyed across the desert to the land of the Jews. But in Jerusalem they found only the fierce old ruler Herod and the golden Temple, and their hearts sank.

When Herod heard their story he remembered that the Jews looked for the coming of a great leader, whom they called the Messiah. Calling together the priests and the scribes who copied the Sacred Books, he asked where the Prince was to be born. They told him the saying of the prophet Micah (you may read it for yourself in the Old Testament), that Bethlehem, although



Hans Memling.

THE VISION OF THE WISE MEN.

From the Picture by Van der Weyden in the Berlin Gallery.

a little city, should be honoured as the birth-place of a Governor who should rule their nation. Then Herod sent privately for these wise men from afar, and asked them the exact time they had seen the star. Pretending to rejoice at these tidings, he bade them seek for the child in Bethlehem, adding, "And when ye have found Him, bring me word, that I may come and worship Him also." He hid a dark thought in his heart. He had slain his wife, and his wife's brother, and several of his sons, and now he would slay this little new-born babe also.

The wise men, or "magi," for so they were called, seem to have left Jerusalem that very evening, and hurried forth beneath the night sky towards the town, six miles away, where Jesus slept. And before them shone the bright star, seeming to lead them on their way, and filling their hearts with joy. The long journey had not been in vain, and it was no child of Herod with the dark and crafty face who was to be king. The star seemed to hang like a lamp above the spot where Jesus rested. To these men it was nothing that they found Him in poverty, for they sought something greater than wealth. They bowed and

worshipped and offered the gifts they had brought so far.

And what did they see that made them so sure they were right? Did they hear the strange story the shepherds had told, which still lingered in the village? Did the babe awake and smile on them with a radiance brighter than the radiance of those stars they knew and loved so well? Or did He look up with deep, grave eyes, in which were hidden all the mysteries of the heavens on which they had pondered? We cannot tell. But God warning them in a dream of Herod's treachery, they did not go back to Jerusalem, but returned by another way to their own country. They carried in place of jewels and spices, the most precious memory of their lives. They had drunk deep at the well of hope.

When the strangers did not return, Herod was filled with uneasiness, and thought of a cruel plan. He gave stealthy orders that every little child in Bethlehem under two years old should be slain. He thought to make himself quite secure as king; but God is wiser than the craftiest man, and takes care of His own. When there was weeping in many a home in Bethlehem for the little children



THE TRIUMPH OF THE INNOCENTS.

From the Picture by W. Holman Hunt in the Art Gallery, Liverpool.

who were slain, Jesus was safe in his mother's arms, travelling to Egypt. For God had warned Joseph to flee from Palestine. But as news soon reached Joseph and Mary that this wicked king was dead, they turned homewards with their precious charge. Not this time to Bethlehem, for one of Herod's sons ruled in his stead. It was in Nazareth once more that Joseph made a home for wife and little child.

CHAPTER X

HOW JESUS SPENT THE YEARS AT NAZARETH

As you have already heard, Joseph and Mary brought Jesus while He was still quite young to live in Nazareth, and He lived there till He was about thirty years old. We know only one story about this part of His life, and you will hear it in the next chapter. But from what we learn of life in the East, and from hints dropped in the Gospels, we can picture to ourselves something of His life in that little country town, lying amid its orchards on the slope of a hill.

He probably lived in a little white house, having only one room; the floor would be of earth, and there would not be much furniture in it; perhaps a low bench along part of the wall, upon which their beds, when rolled up in the morning, were placed; a low table or stand for a tray would

occupy the centre of the room, and round this the family gathered at mealtime, sitting on cushions or on the bare floor. Near the door would stand some big earthenware jars with sprigs of green leaves in their spouts to keep the water within cool and free from insects; also a hand-mill, made of two stones fitting into each other, by which the corn could be ground. There would be a chest painted in bright colours, where Mary kept her treasures—some of the precious gifts the wise men had brought, and perhaps one or two manuscript copies of part of the Old Testament, if she were fortunate enough to possess them.

A little outside stair led to the roof, which might be used as another room, and where the family could sleep in very hot weather. Close to the house, perhaps in a shed, would be the carpenter's shop, where Jesus surely spent happy hours as a little child, watching the shavings fly and the bright tools cutting through the wood.

In summer and autumn the country about Nazareth would grow brown and bare and dusty. The loveliest things in these days would be the gold of oranges and lemons glinting through the foliage, and the juicy figs that were so good in

thirsty weather, and the grapes that hung in ripening clusters, soon to be gathered and made into wine.

It was the spring that touched the brown earth and made it burst forth into beauty. The fields blushed red with anemones, and the trees blossomed, and the young grass sprang green and tender, and the silence was filled with the music of birds. Then we can imagine how Jesus would go out upon the hills, and shade His eyes from the bright sunshine till they caught that line of living radiance which was the sea. And as the soft wind blew from the west, and lifted His hair and breathed in His face, seeming to murmur of the flowers it kissed and the dews it drank in its path, He must have given thanks in great joy, and pondered in hopefulness the days that were to come.

How did He spend His time as a boy? When He was five years old He would be taken to the Synagogue or meeting-house, where portions of the Old Testament were read every Monday and Thursday, which were market-days, as well as on Saturday, which was the Jewish Sabbath. There was probably no school for Him to attend; but

somehow, perhaps from the keeper of the Synagogue, he learned to read the Sacred Books. This was not quite easy, for they were written in old Hebrew, and the people of His time spoke a somewhat different language. It was as if an English boy had to learn to read the Bible in English of the time of Chaucer.

Part of those early days would be occupied in helping His mother, for I am sure He always longed to keep her from being too tired, and soon there were four little brothers as well as sisters growing up alongside Him. Sometimes He would take them on to the hillside, that they might play among the flowers and watch the birds. As soon as He could work a little, Joseph would want His help in the shop, for the family was large and Joseph was poor. Through the day He would work with the saw and the plane, making yokes for the farmers' oxen, and lattices and doors for any new house that was being built. His hands grew hard and His body strong as He worked. When the hours of work were over I think He would often go quietly to the crest of the hill and look away to Mount Carmel and across the plain where the great roads ran. Here in the peace

and stillness He would speak to His Father in heaven and hear the divine voice in His heart.

However tired He was on the Saturday, He always went to the service in the little Synagogue, for we are told later, when He came back to Nazareth, He went "into the Synagogue, *as His custom was*, on the Sabbath day." There was no fixed preacher in the Synagogue, and I fancy the people who took it in turn to expound the Scriptures would sometimes speak foolishly concerning God and His will, and often it would be a little dull. He would see about Him many faces that were hard and sly, as well as some sincere and reverent. But although it would have been easier to commune with God His Father in the sweet open country, He did not give up going. I think there were two reasons for this. He knew how much His nation had been taught by these services. He knew, too, that it was a happiness to Mary for Him to be with her.

As He grew older, life became harder, for it seems that before He was quite grown to manhood Joseph died. It must have been a struggle to keep the home together and always to provide enough food for His brothers and sisters. I think

HOW JESUS SPENT THE YEARS AT NAZARETH 61

Mary must have felt sometimes that the wonderful things which happened at His birth were just a dream. For here He was, working just like other men and living quietly at home, the only difference being that He was always patient and kind. He answered the rude and overbearing gently, and those who tried to cheat Him He forgave. If Mary was tired and spoke harshly, He never answered roughly, but was always full of tenderness and love. Yes, her first-born son, who had come to her in such a wonderful way, was good enough to be the Messiah, but it did not seem as if He were going to be the great Deliverer she had hoped.

Yet He was always a little of a mystery to her, as you will hear in the next chapter. Sometimes He spoke of God in so deep and intimate a way that she could not understand what He meant. Things which angered other people did not move Him, but whenever He saw what was wrong and shameful His eyes blazed, and at the sight of sorrow He wept as if those in trouble were His dearest friends. And yet He was not growing rich, nor was He a leader among the young men, nor had He gained any powerful

friends. He was just Jesus, the village carpenter.

But the angels of God knew better. God often works silently and slowly, and even the eyes which have seen heavenly visions cannot always discern Him, although He is as near to them as Jesus was to His mother in the narrow home of Nazareth.

CHAPTER XI.

THE SECOND VISIT OF JESUS TO THE TEMPLE

WHEN Jesus was twelve years old there was a great stir one morning in the little home in Nazareth, as Joseph and Mary prepared to take Him for the first time on their yearly journey to Jerusalem for the Feast of the Passover. A Jewish boy was considered a man at the age of twelve, and looked like a youth of seventeen or eighteen ; for children grew up more quickly in the East than in our country. As Mary turned at the door to say a last farewell to the children she left behind, the street was already filling with their neighbours who were setting forth on the same errand ; for every pious Jew desired to be present in Jerusalem for at least one of the three great feasts, and the Passover was the most popular of all. It reminded the nation that God had delivered

them from slavery in Egypt, and encouraged the hope that He would deliver them again and set them free from their present oppressors.

It was a gay little caravan that passed out of the little valley into the great plain, and grew larger and larger as parties from other towns and villages joined them. What greeting of old friends there would be, and interchange of news, and sometimes they would break into song to make the journey shorter, chanting their favourite psalms, perhaps specially Pss. 120-134, which some call the Songs of Ascent, or going up. But Jesus would not find the road long. For the first time He would see the different battlefields and holy places of which He had often heard, where God had made Himself known to Israel. All too soon they reached the last stage of the journey, and saw the city of Jerusalem on the other side of the valley—a fair sight, with its mighty towers and lofty wall, and the white houses crowning the hills and lining the valleys, and the Temple with its golden roof flashing in the sun.

You can imagine how full and busy the days would be with the services in the Temple and the preparations for the feast. It was called the Pass-

over because God's angel *passed over* all the houses of the Israelites in Egypt when the first-born of their oppressors was slain. As you can read in the Book of Exodus, each family had slain a lamb and sprinkled the blood on the doorposts of the house and then made a solemn feast, at which the lamb, roasted whole, was eaten. It was this part of the ancient ceremony which was repeated year by year.

On the morning of the feast-day Joseph would go out to buy a lamb, and then with a little party of his kinsfolk, in a room lent them by some acquaintance, they kept the festival. How full of interest and of joy Jesus would be! Did He begin to understand that He would be a greater Deliverer than Moses? We cannot tell. But He was soon to show that He thought and felt much more than Joseph and Mary understood.

Jerusalem was exceedingly crowded at Passover time, for many Jews came from abroad as well as from all parts of Palestine. Some people think that as many as three millions (more than half as many people as live in London) were in the city at this season of the year. As a great many pilgrims for Galilee started together, it was diffi-

cult to keep one's friends in sight, and Joseph and Mary left the city without seeing Jesus at their side. But they were not anxious. They thought He would be with some other youths from Nazareth, and would rejoin them at their halting-place for the night. But when they reached it He could not be found. Their kinsfolk and neighbours had seen nothing of Him since they left the city. With anxious hearts Joseph and Mary retraced their steps, wondering what could have detained their son, and fearful lest He had suffered some accident.

For a whole day they sought Him without success. I do not know where they looked. Perhaps they thought, although they might have known better, that He would be watching the soldiers with their glittering armour, studying the shops in the Street of the Carpenters, or lingering with some of their acquaintances who lived all the year round in Jerusalem. But there was no trace of Him, and they went to rest sick at heart. When they rose next morning they turned as a last resource to the Temple.

The Temple itself was quite a small building although so richly decorated; only priests could

enter it. But it was surrounded with different courts, some of which were of great size. The largest was called the Court of the Gentiles. Here the birds and animals for the sacrifices were sold, and any strangers might enter it. Along each side of it there were beautiful halls, open at the side and with high roofs set on lofty pillars. One of them was called Solomon's Cloister, and was grander than Westminster Abbey, being almost as lofty, much longer, and having no less than one hundred and sixty-two great columns.

In different parts of these outer courts the leading teachers of the Jews held their classes. The Temple was a little like the University of Palestine. The only book studied by these Rabbis, as the teachers were called, was their Bible, the Old Testament, and they not only knew it thoroughly, but they discussed all the meanings which other teachers had found or imagined in the different passages. For the Jews were not content with the simple and natural meaning of the sacred writings, but sought all manner of hidden and curious suggestions in it.

As Joseph and Mary wandered through the Temple looking eagerly for the familiar face, they

saw a little crowd gathered round the seats of some of the most famous teachers. Drawing near, they thought they heard a voice they knew, and pressing through the throng they saw Jesus sitting at the feet of these aged and learned men. He was not only listening, but asking questions when anything was not clear to Him, and a look of wonderment and admiration had stolen over the faces of the rabbis.

Jesus had found out before this that His mother—and still more Joseph—could not enter into His deep thoughts or explain to Him anything which He did not fully understand in the writings of the Prophets. A hundred questions were in His heart, and when He found the greatest teachers in the land, He stayed to learn from them. I fear He was disappointed, for they were not so much anxious to know what God meant as what other teachers had said. Indeed they had already begun to question Him, though He was hardly more than a child, and they were astonished at His understanding and His answers.

Mary scarcely recognised her son. Was this Jesus, so quiet and loving at home? Here He was talking to the great teachers as if He were



Mansell.

THE YOUTHFUL CHRIST AND THE PHARISEES.

From the Picture by Bernardino Luini in the National Gallery, London.

Himself the son of a rabbi, and entirely forgetful of her. You might have expected Mary to be very proud of her son, but she was only hurt and vexed. She stepped up to Him at once, and interrupting the conversation, said, "Son, why hast Thou thus dealt with us? behold, Thy father and I have sought Thee sorrowing." Mary had forgotten that Jesus was not given to her for her own joy, and she slipped into the ordinary phrase and called Joseph the father of Jesus, although she knew well that her first-born was the gift of the Holy Ghost to her before she was married to Joseph.

Jesus turned on them a look of mingled surprise and reproach, and said, "How is it that ye sought Me? Did you not know that I must be in My Father's house?" With His deep sense of perfect nearness to God, He felt He was God's Son, and knew that He had no earthly father, so He corrects Mary and calls God His Father. And He could not bear that they should have thought He stayed behind for a boyish whim or as an idle pleasure-seeker. Having missed them in the crowd, it had seemed to Him the best thing to go to the Temple. That was the only place

where He cared to be, and He thought Mary would know at once where to look for Him.

She was awestricken at these grave words. Neither she nor her husband understood what they meant, but they dared not reply. Jesus without a word followed them and took the way to Nazareth. That was a strange journey home. Did Joseph and Mary ask themselves with sad hearts, "Will Jesus not stay with us now? Will He be the same dutiful son after this?" They need not have been afraid. He was just as quiet and obedient as before. But Mary could not forget that sudden flash of dignity and His claim to be more than her child. She kept those things in her heart, often thinking over them, as she lifted the lid of the chest and fingered once again the jewels brought to Him as a baby. But the years passed over. Jesus grew to manhood. He became her protector and friend and the stay of the household. And still there was no sign that He was to be the bravest hero and the most loving helper the Jews had ever seen.

BOOK II

THE MINISTRY OF JESUS

CHAPTER XII

HOW JESUS CAME TO BE BAPTIZED

WHILE the days went on tranquilly at Nazareth and Jesus worked at His trade, John, His cousin, the son of Zacharias and Elizabeth, was leading a very different life. As his aged father and mother died while he was still young, and he had neither brother nor sister, he was free to choose his own path. He left the little town in which he had been brought up, and went to live among the rocky hills and bare valleys between Jerusalem and the Jordan. There, where human feet but seldom trod, he could spend long days thinking upon God and His messages to the nation.

It was a bare, hard life. His only covering was a long rough shirt of camel's hair, fastened with a leathern belt, for he had no money, and did not need a girdle with its big pocket. For food he

caught and dried locusts, and he took the honey from the wild bees that made their hives in the crevices of the rocks. These and the goats that sometimes crossed his path were almost the only living things in that desolate place. All his hours were filled with thought and prayers and longing. Clearer and brighter grew the hope of the great Deliverer.

His early childhood had been fragrant with dim and wonderful thoughts of the Messiah, which grew with his growth, and took shape and grandeur as he read the ancient books, until the thought had become so big that there was no room for any other ; and here at last, in the rocky solitudes, his heart burned with the certainty that the Messiah was at hand, and that people must be warned and prepared. No one who had lived alone with God as he had, could think merely of a leader against the Romans. Prayer had made him able to see more clearly. He beheld the more cruel oppression of sin, and longed with all his strength for the coming of the greatest kingdom, the kingdom of heaven.

So when Jesus had passed His thirtieth year, travellers along the Jordan road to Jerusalem, or



Anderson.

JOHN THE BAPTIST.

From the Picture by Andrea del Sarto in the Pitti Gallery, Florence.

past the Dead Sea, began to tell of a strange figure which would sometimes appear in their encampments, crying aloud, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." His wild appearance and his stern voice made men tremble. Here was one who feared God so much that he feared no other. Soon people began to journey down from Jerusalem, and crowds gathered on the banks of the Jordan to listen to the new preacher. You may wonder how so many people had time to leave their homes and their business. But every seven years among the Jews it was the custom to give their land a year of rest and to do as little work as possible. The fields lay fallow, and even the slaves and hired servants had less to do. Every one had more time to devote to religious duties. We think it was in such a year that John began to preach.

The church and the sermons were as unusual as the preacher. With the bare rocks behind them, and in their ears the swirl of the Jordan hurrying down to the Dead Sea, men trembled as they heard the warning cry of a new prophet. His most frequent message he took from the prophecies of Isaiah, "The voice of one crying in

the wilderness, Make ready the way of the Lord." His was no call to arms against their oppressors. He bade men see the sin in their own lives, change their mind, and cast away that which was wrong. He told them not to boast of being Jews, for their only safety lay in leading a holy life. He warned them that one greater than he was coming, who should be their Judge. Sometimes he likened this Judge to a woodcutter, whose mighty axe would strike to the root of every tree that bore no fruit, and sometimes to a winnower, who would separate the chaff from the wheat and burn it. Fire, fire, fire, the fire of judgment, was his message.

When he had succeeded in awaking the consciences of his hearers, he did not tell them to go and offer sacrifices, but pointed out their plainest duties. To the rich he said, "Give food and clothing to the needy"; to the tax-gatherers, "Take no more than is your due"; and to the soldiers, "Harm no man, and be content with your wages." Those who repented and longed to live better lives, he led into the Jordan, and bathed them in its waters to show that they had cast off their sins. It had been a

custom of the Jews when a heathen learned to worship the true God for him to be bathed as a sign that he was forsaking his old thoughts. John filled the old observance with new meaning, and he became known as John the Baptist.

To Jesus, at work at the carpenter's bench in Nazareth, the tidings of John's stern teaching came like a trumpet call. His brothers were now old enough to support their mother, and at last He laid aside His tools and turned His face towards the Jordan. It is probable that John had known Jesus as a boy, and perhaps had heard from Elizabeth of the message of God's great angel to Mary. As he stood, baptizing the people in the river, with what joy he must have seen Jesus coming down to the water. But here was One who, he knew, had no sins to wash away, and he said, "I have need to be baptized of Thee, and comest Thou to me?" But to Jesus baptism must have meant the enrolment of all who would take part in the new great enterprise. He felt that the time had come for Him to be set apart to His divine work, and answered, "Suffer it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness."

When Jesus came up from the water a strange

and beautiful thing happened, which only He and John had eyes to see. The sky seemed to open above them, and from its depths there flashed forth and alighted upon Jesus what shone and trembled like the breast and wings of a dove, lit by the sun, and a voice was heard, saying, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

It may not at first seem so to you, but this was more wonderful than the coming of Gabriel, or the singing of the angels on the night of Jesus' birth. For it was the Spirit of God Himself entering fully into His Son. From that hour John knew that here at last was the Deliverer. In a moment the wonder was past. More people were pressing down to the riverside, and John had to continue his work all through the day. When evening fell, Jesus was not to be found. But the Baptist lay down that night like a conqueror on the battlefield of a great victory, for the dreams and hopes of past years had all come true. The Messiah had begun His work.



Anderson.

THE BAPTISM OF CHRIST.

From the Picture by Cima in S. Giovanni in Bracora, Venice.

CHAPTER XIII

HOW JESUS WAS TEMPTED

OUT in that bare and rocky wilderness where John had prayed and striven, another and greater than he was seeking to understand perfectly the will of His Father. Jesus had gone up from the Jordan with the call to His great work sounding in His ears, for the voice of God Himself had set Him apart. His heart was full of strange thoughts and feelings, and He was conscious of the new powers that had entered Him with the Holy Spirit. He had sought this desolate place that in solitude and silence He might speak with His Father in heaven.

Well might He be deeply stirred. His forefathers had wept and prayed and longed for the Messiah through many years. He knew how hard would be the task, and that even though He was the Beloved Son and strengthened by the Holy

Spirit He would need all His strength. His busy mind drove Him restlessly from place to place. Through forty long days and nights He remained in deep thought, hardly aware that He was hungry or tired, scarcely knowing where He walked.

In that barren and dreary spot the silence was broken only by the passing of some wild creature or the cries of jackals and hyænas when darkness fell. Yet during those days of wandering Jesus was not alone. A dark presence brooded there and overshadowed Him. We have heard how the shining angels cried out with joy at the birth of the Christ. There were other unseen beings who were deeply interested in His coming but did not rejoice. These were the spirits of evil, the chief of whom men call Satan. Satan, who hates all that is good, hated Jesus with a perfect hatred because He, the utterly holy, had come to free men from sin. This Evil Spirit was waiting to put forth all his strength that Jesus might either be unfitted for His work or led to do it in a wrong way. Thus before God and His angels a great battle was fought in the silence of the desert between the great Tempter and the great Saviour.

We do not know in what form Satan came to



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THE DEAD SEA AT THE PRESENT DAY.
From a Photograph.

Jesus. Perhaps he was not seen at all, but only shot his evil suggestions into the mind of the perfectly pure One. The battle would be all the more terrible if the foe were unseen. The moment of attack was prudently chosen. A great hunger possessed Jesus, for He had not eaten for many days. He felt strangely weak and tired to be God's own Son. There was, of course, no bread to be had in the desert, and some of the stones lying about His feet were shaped like loaves and seemed to mock a hungry man. Just then the Tempter approached Him and said, "If Thou art the Son of God, command this stone that it become a loaf." Doubt was thrown out whether Jesus were really the divine Son at all, and it was suggested that by this miracle He would relieve His hunger and at the same time prove Himself to be what the voice of God had declared.

If Jesus had yielded, He would have been using for His own comfort the power He possessed to ease others, and, worse still, he would have been distrusting His Father's words. He did not argue with the Evil One nor answer him in any words of His own. He remembered a saying in the Old Testament which He had learned when He was a

child, and said, "It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." You see how complete the answer was. The words spoken to Him at the Jordan were enough. He would not use His wonderful powers to make life pleasanter for Himself, nor strengthen His faith by calling upon God to work a miracle.

Satan was foiled, but he did not depart. He used a still more cunning wile. He, too, began to quote Scripture. Showing Jesus the highest pinnacle of the Temple, from which you could look sheer down hundreds of feet into the valley, he reminded Him of the words in the 91st Psalm, where we are told that God's angels shall bear up His chosen ones, and said, "If Thou art the Son of God, cast Thyself down." It was like saying, "Well, you feed your soul by trusting in God's word instead of feeding your body with bread. Show me how much you trust. If you are God's Son He will not let you be harmed." Again Jesus did not argue, nor did He use His own words. He quoted from the same book of the Bible, the Book of Deuteronomy, which many people rarely read. His answer was very short,

but very clear, "Again it is written, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God." Jesus meant that to go into danger when it was not necessary would be like trying to test God. It would not really be an act of trust, but an attempt to force Him to prove that He keeps His promises.

There was one other temptation through which Jesus had to pass, and I think it was hardest of all. Satan knew that the Jews were expecting the Messiah to come as a great prince who would conquer the Romans and make Israel the greatest of all nations. He no longer pretended that Jesus was not the Messiah, but he proposed to Him a short and easy way of doing His work. He showed Him armies and treasures and far-stretching kingdoms, and said that all these should belong to Jesus if He would but acknowledge the Prince of Evil as the most powerful one in the world.

It was a very clever temptation, for it seemed so much easier for a great prince to win the Jews. When He had driven out their enemies He could begin to teach them about the kingdom of heaven and make them truly good. But Jesus knew that it is not possible to serve God and the

powers of evil at the same time, and that nothing could make it right to set Satan above God. Again he quoted from that old book and said: "Get thee hence, Satan, for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve." Then the Tempter's power failed. He could suggest no other evil thoughts.

Yet he did not leave Jesus long. Again and again throughout the ministry of the Christ he sought to turn Him from His work. He tempted Him repeatedly to do what would please the people instead of what would please God. Once when Jesus was near Jerusalem, and He was preparing His disciples for the sorrow that awaited them there, Satan put it into the heart of one of them to dissuade Him from going on. In a moment Jesus knew that the thought had come from the great Enemy, and cried, "Get thee behind Me, Satan."

The Evil One could never overcome Jesus. In the end Jesus completely conquered him. All who have the will to overcome him and seek the help of Jesus will share the Saviour's victory. We must arm ourselves, as He did, with strong thoughts

from the Book of God, and be on guard for the moment of attack.

When Satan had left Him, Jesus understood His great work and was in perfect peace. He was ready to begin His holy war, not against the Romans, but against the evil of the world.

And God sent His angels to give rest and healing to the weary body and spirit of His Beloved Son.

CHAPTER XIV

THE COMRADES OF JESUS

FOR nearly three years after Jesus had been baptized, He travelled up and down the country, from town to village, by lake-shore and hillside, teaching the people and seeking to win their trust. He did not stay in one place and wait for them to come to Him, as did John the Baptist. He sought them out both in Galilee, His own province, and also in Jerusalem and other parts of Judæa. Thus He became a wayfarer, and sometimes at nightfall He found no friendly roof. But from the beginning He had companions who shared His trials. In a very few days He made several friends, and later He chose twelve men to be His comrades and messengers and scholars. With these He talked as they journeyed from place to place. They saw all His wonderful deeds of mercy and of

love, and could ask Him questions when they failed to understand. It is from them that we have received the story of His life. You are to hear in this chapter how He won these comrades.

After His triumph in the wilderness He went back for a day or two to the Jordan valley, where people still came to be baptized. John must have searched the crowd day after day for the face he had for a moment seen encircled with heavenly light. When he saw Jesus coming back to him, he was filled with joy, and cried out, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world!" Here at last, he told the people, was the Christ whose way he had striven to prepare. He had probably been silent concerning the wonderful vision until his glad eyes should again behold Jesus. Now he spoke openly of the ethereal light and of the mysterious voice which had greeted this young man when He came to be baptized.

The next day the Baptist again stood by the Jordan, and only two of his disciples, by name Andrew and John, were with him. Jesus passed near them, and, just as before, their master

exclaimed, "Behold the Lamb of God." I think he used this new name because he was thinking how a prophet had said that the Deliverer should bear the sins of His people, and be like a "lamb led to the slaughter." Or perhaps he was thinking of the lambs slain at the first Passover, when the Hebrews escaped from Egypt and were protected from the anger of God which destroyed their enemies.

However this may be, Andrew and John waited no longer, but turned and followed Jesus. Hearing footsteps behind Him, He stopped and asked what they wanted. They were confused for the moment, for He spoke and was dressed just like one of themselves, and did not look as they imagined the Messiah should. But they gave Him the title of respect, and said, "Rabbi (that is, Master), where are you living?" Jesus answered, "Come and ye shall see." It must have been in some poor little hut or booth not far from the riverside, but their surroundings were soon forgotten. It was four in the afternoon when they came; hour after hour passed, and the sun sank and the stars shone out before they left Him. When at last they said farewell, they knew that

He who wore the peasant's dress was none other than the Christ.

Andrew's first thought was of his brother Simon, and he hurried to find him, saying, "We have found the Messiah." Simon was warm-hearted and impulsive, quick to speak and quick to act, but very variable. Jesus read all this when His eyes rested on him, and He said, "Thou shalt be called Cephas," which means the same as Petros, "a rock." In saying this, Jesus was promising that His new friend should gain what he needed most, steadfastness. From that day Simon was one of Jesus' most devoted comrades. He is better known by his new name Peter, the rock-man, than by the old.

The day following, Jesus was setting out for Galilee, and said to a fellow-townsmen of Andrew and John, Philip by name, "Follow Me." By the end of the journey Philip, too, was convinced concerning their leader, and set off to find his friend Nathaniel, one of the holiest men in all Galilee. Philip told him that Jesus of Nazareth was the Messiah, and Nathaniel in wonder and doubt asked, "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?" He knew that Nazareth was famous

neither for its synagogue nor teachers, and that it was just a rude country town of which some people gave an evil report. But he consented to go with Philip.

As he drew near, Jesus greeted him in a strange fashion, saying, "Before Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig-tree, I saw thee." I do not think that Jesus could always see what people were doing, for He was really a man although also the Beloved Son of God. But whenever it would help Him in His work to see what was hidden from others, He received this power. Nathaniel had been standing under a fig-tree in earnest prayer before Philip came to him. Thus in one sentence Jesus revealed to His listeners that in Him were the eyes of God. Nathaniel, whose heart was ever open to the truth, needed no more proof. Looking up with his clear eyes to the commanding face of Jesus, he said, "Rabbi, Thou art the Son of God ; Thou art the King of Israel."

In this way Jesus had won five friends in a very short time. But at first they did not remain with Him always. Peter and Andrew and John were fishermen, and went back to their boats on the

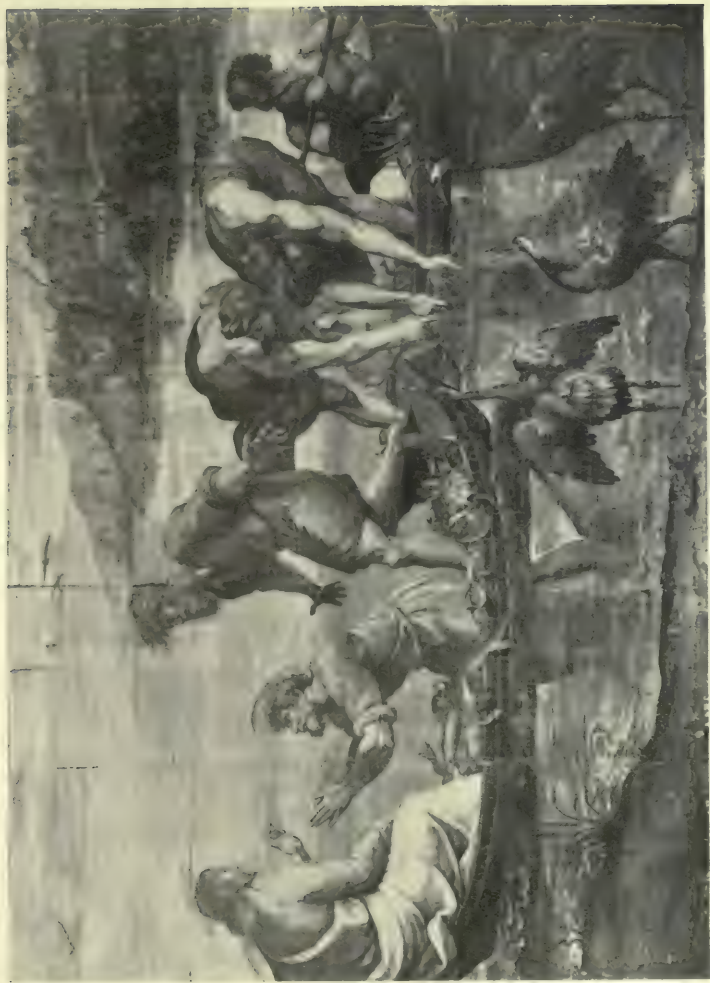
Lake of Galilee for a while. But one day, as Jesus was teaching the people on the lake-shore, His listeners pressed so close to Him that He was almost pushed into the blue waters behind Him. Close at hand lay Peter's boat. He and his companions were busy washing their nets, lest the fish-scales upon them should cause them to catch fire in the hot sun. Jesus, calling to him, asked to be allowed to sit in his boat, and bade him push out a little way. This was quickly done, and from this strange pulpit Jesus taught the people on shore.

When He had finished speaking, He told Peter to push out further and to let down his nets. Peter was tired out and disappointed, for he had been out all night and had not caught a single fish. Now it was broad day, and it seemed more than ever unlikely that fish could be caught. Not very willingly he did as Jesus said. Then a strange thing happened. The ropes of the net were pulled and strained as by a great weight, and, gazing down through the water, he saw the gleaming bodies of a great shoal of fish. Instantly he called to his partners, James and his brother John, who had been to the Jordan, and they quickly brought their boat alongside. Both boats were laden with

the fish, but there were so many that it seemed they must sink. When Peter saw this, he was much afraid, for he knew that only the power of God could have wrought such a miracle. He fell at Jesus' feet, saying, "Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord." "Fear not," said Jesus; "from henceforth thou shalt catch men."

That was the real beginning of the comrade-life which Peter and Andrew and James and John led with Jesus. From that hour they followed Him wherever He went, leaving their nets and boats, and even the fish they had caught, to the care of others. They would have been richer had they kept to their trade. They were not going to an easier life, for, as Jesus said, it was just to be another kind of fishing—fishing for men. Yet they went cheerfully, for to them He was sunshine and springtime and everything winning and good. To them He was as God, and they were right.

Another disciple was called to Jesus' side in an unlooked-for way. His name was Matthew, and he was a collector of taxes. The tax-gatherers were much hated by the Jews, partly because the money went to the conquering Romans or to



Valentine & Sons, Ltd.

THE CALL OF THE APOSTLES.

From the Cartoon by Raphael in South Kensington Museum, London.

the rulers appointed by them, and partly because the amount of tax was not fixed for each person, and many were compelled to pay more than their due, especially if they were poor and defenceless. But though the Jews despised all tax-gatherers, these publicans as they were called were not all bad men. Matthew had seen and heard Jesus, and had learned to honour Him. He felt that He was by far the best man he had ever known. Perhaps he longed sometimes in a vague way to be allowed to help this Teacher in His noble work. He envied the friends who were always at Jesus' side.

One day, as he sat in his office where the tolls were paid, with his account-books before him, in the midst of his business, two words changed his whole life. Jesus, passing by, turned and said, "Follow Me." Matthew knew what this meant: "Come and live with Me; learn of Me and work for Me." He rose from his books and obeyed the voice of His Master as simply as a little child. He was entering a life of hardship and poverty, but he went with great gladness of heart. He made a feast for his friends in honour of the occasion, and invited a great company of his old acquaint-

ances. He hoped that they, too, might feel the attractiveness of the Christ, and be drawn to join that holy company. How eager each of Jesus' friends was to make others love Him!

After this fashion Jesus gathered His comrades. When they had been with Him for some time, He chose twelve of them, chiefly His oldest followers, and sent them out through the villages of Galilee to be His heralds. Therefore they were called the Apostles, that is, the "sent" ones. When they returned they were always with Him, like the bodyguard of a general or the scholars of a teacher. He trusted them, lived with them, and gave them the high honour of being chief helpers in His work. Yet several of them were only fishermen. Almost all seem to have been young men like Himself. Most of them were poor, and none had been trained by the great teachers at Jerusalem.

Do you wonder why the Beloved Son of God, the long-looked-for Messiah, chose His helpers from among such as these? Jesus did not seek what most men seek in their helpers. He sought love and simplicity and earnestness and strength. These men loved Him, and love gives us eyes and ears and memories. They were simple, and there-

fore willing to be taught. They were earnest, eager to be better, and therefore ready to brave danger and hardship to make their nation better. They were strong with the strength of youth and hard work, able to suffer with Him and to toil in His enterprise. Thus they were well suited to be Jesus' comrades, for He had everything to give. He only needed people willing to receive and to give again. These tender-hearted, childlike, zealous, stalwart men were better helpers than the nobles of Herod or the rabbis of Jerusalem could have been.

CHAPTER XV

WHAT JESUS DID AT THE WEDDING FEAST

WHEN Jesus arrived in Galilee He found His family in a state of excitement, for they were just starting to be present at the marriage of a friend in the neighbouring town of Cana. Jesus was invited also, and when it appeared that He had friends with Him, they were included in the invitation.

A marriage is a time of great festivity in the East. It is generally celebrated at nightfall. There is a procession with torches and music; many guests are invited, and the feasting is almost always carried on for two days, and sometimes for a whole week. The gaily-lit house and well-laden tables were a great contrast to the bare rocks and solemn scenes from which Jesus had just come. Perhaps you are a little surprised that He was

willing to be present at such a scene of merry-making when He had just been set apart for His high and solemn work. You cannot imagine John the Baptist in his robe of camel's hair sitting at that feast.

But although Jesus began with the same message, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand," He was very different from John, and was going to do His work in a very different way. He lived and dressed just as other people, and He sought and found His best opportunities for doing good by meeting men and women in their ordinary life. Above all, He came with glad tidings, and rejoiced to see people happy. Once He spoke of His friends and Himself as a marriage party: they were so full of joy because God had not forgotten His children. And at the beginning of the work the dark shadows thrown by men's dulness and cruelty had not begun to fall. He was not out of place, and did not feel Himself out of place, in the midst of laughter and happy hearts.

There was one at that table whose face shone with gladness. Mary was feeling very proud of her son. She did not know what had happened

in the wilderness, but she did know that He had begun to teach, and already disciples were at His side who called Him "Rabbi." As the feast drew near its end she noticed that the servants were looking uneasy, and that her friends were becoming very uncomfortable. She soon learned the reason. The wine had run short. Some of the guests were sitting with unfilled cups, and the last wineskin was empty. Perhaps it was through the arrival of the five friends of Jesus at the last moment that the wine was exhausted. Mary whispered to her son, "They have no wine." We do not know what she expected Him to do, but she had always remembered the wonderful signs at His birth. Now that He had begun His public ministry, she may have thought that He could work some marvel and save her friends from the disgrace of seeming mean and inhospitable.

Jesus answered her in words that sound unkind to our ears, "Woman, what have I to do with thee? Mine hour is not yet come"; but in the Greek or Galilæan tongue they would not seem harsh, only a little distant. For the word we translate "woman" also means "lady." But why did not Jesus say "Mother"? And why did He tell her



Neurdein.

THE MARRIAGE AT CANA.

From the Picture by Paolo Veronese in the Louvre, Paris.

not to try to direct His actions? Because He wanted her to understand that now He could only act under the guidance of God, that Father of whom He had spoken so long ago in the Temple, when she reproached Him for having forgotten her. Mary was not hurt at His words. She understood that He was only waiting for the right moment, and whispered to the servants, "Whatsoever He saith to you, do it."

At the door of the feast-room stood six water-jars of stone. The water in them was not used for drinking, but for washing. Every guest before he began the feast would have water poured over his hands and arms, for it was the custom to use the fingers in helping oneself from certain dishes. Jesus said to the servants, "Fill the water-pots with water." When they had been filled to the brim, He bade them draw out some into a goblet and take it to the ruler of the feast, for at a wedding one of the guests was generally chosen as master of ceremonies.

You can imagine that the servant felt nervous when he offered a draught from the well in place of wine. But as soon as the ruler had tasted it, he cried out in surprise and delight. He was

an outspoken and merry man, and calling for the bridegroom, in whose house the feast was held, said aloud, so that all could hear, "Every man at the beginning doth set forth good wine; and when men have well drunk, then that which is worse: but thou hast kept the good wine until now." The bridegroom did not know what to answer; but soon the story was whispered round, and the guests turned eyes of wonder on the village carpenter who had worked this marvel.

It was a great miracle. Yet many of God's works which have grown so common to our eyes and thoughts are just as wonderful. From the brown earth spring the radiant flowers and lovely green things. The rain from the clouds passes into the tree and becomes the blood of the grape or the juice of the pomegranate. It happens a hundred thousand times every year, but no one knows the secret whereby the rose becomes red or the raindrops are changed into the blood of the vine.

The friends of Jesus were fully assured by this sign that their Master was the Messiah, and it taught them that He was not only great but also most kind. He did His first miracle just to make

people happy, and to save kind hearts from disgrace and discomfort. Wherever He is welcomed to-day, He works in the same beautiful way. All the things which we think a little common and dull, though very useful, such as work and duty, become bright and lovely when we make Him the chief guest of our hearts and do "*whatsoever He saith unto us.*"

CHAPTER XVI

HOW JESUS BEGAN HIS WORK IN JUDÆA

ONE morning a great commotion was heard in the outer enclosure of the Temple. There was a noise of falling tables and jangling money, the lowing of cattle and the bleating of sheep, and above it all, the discord of men's angry voices. Then cattle and sheep and men came hurrying pell-mell through the gate and down the street. Soon the enclosure was left bare and vacant, save for the worshippers going up to the Temple. This was the first public act of Jesus in Jerusalem.

After He had made the marriage feast glad with His bounty, He went down to Capernaum and spent some weeks there, talking much with His new friends and teaching them to know Him better. At first His mother remained with Him, perhaps in constant expectation that He would

raise the standard as the Messiah. But He lived on quietly day after day, until it was time to go up to Jerusalem to the Passover.

When He arrived there, He found that the outer enclosure of the Temple had become more than ever a common market-place. The priests, who, it seems, shared in the profit, allowed sheep and cattle and doves to be sold there for the convenience of those who wished to offer sacrifices. There were also the money-changers at their tables; for no Jew would pay his tribute to the Temple in foreign coins which might be stamped with the heads of heathen gods, for this would be to profane a place sacred to the true God. But it was a worse dishonour to turn the Temple court into a place of business where men bargained and cheated and lounged. Every worshipper had to push his way through the throng to reach the inner Temple, and sometimes the din would quite distract his thoughts from sacred things. Though people had grumbled, the abuse continued and grew greater, till Jesus determined to purify His Father's house.

He might have been seen that morning in a corner of the Court of the Gentiles, as it was

called, preparing a scourge of knotted cords. Then He began quietly to drive out the cattle and sheep near Him, and told the money-changers they must go. When they refused, He upset their tables and scattered their moneys, and going on to the sellers of doves, He bade them remove the cages. Then a tumult arose, angry looks were cast at Him, and many were inclined to defy Him, but soon the whole company of traffickers went streaming through the gate down to the city.

But you ask, "How could Jesus alone drive out these merchants?" I do not think it was a miracle. One brave man doing right can sometimes overawe a hundred in the wrong. These men felt in their hearts that by bargaining and cheating and overcharging they were disgracing the Temple. The bystanders, too, had no love for them. One fearless man did what many had longed to do, and others came about Him to see that there was no violence.

From that day the young carpenter was a marked man in Jerusalem. He was admired by some, especially when He began to do miracles, but He was hated by the priestly party because of His interference with the Temple arrangements

and His silent condemnation of their carelessness. Yet there was one priest, by name Nicodemus, who was deeply interested in Jesus. He felt sure that this Galilæan was a prophet, and longed to speak with Him, but dared not do it in public, lest he should be seen.

So one night as Jesus sat in His lodging, and the street outside was quiet, a knock was heard at His door, and a muffled figure entered the room. It was Nicodemus.

He had been unable to overcome his anxiety and curiosity, and had come by stealth to put some questions concerning the kingdom the Messiah was to establish. He began very respectfully, saying, "Rabbi, we know that Thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these signs that Thou doest, except God be with him." Jesus read Nicodemus' heart. He saw that this was a Pharisee who was concerned for all manner of outward things and expected the Messiah to found an earthly kingdom, and yet was in earnest. So He answered his thoughts rather than his words, and said very solemnly, "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." Nicodemus was confused by the directness and strangeness of

these words, and tried to argue with Him, saying, "How can a man be born when he is old?"

Then Jesus told him that a spiritual birth was meant, and showed him that he needed a new heart and a new life and a new way of thinking about God, which only the Spirit of God can give. Perhaps the night-wind was sighing in the street, and as they heard some sudden gust, Jesus said: "Do not wonder that I say unto thee, Ye must be born again. The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit."

This was all strange to Nicodemus, who had thought of religion chiefly as an outward thing. But he was too much stirred to argue further, and only asked, "How can these things be?" Then Jesus told him that He Himself was the Son of God from heaven, and the proof of these things. He could bestow the life that should have no end on those who believed in Him. He said that it was only through God's love that He had come, and spoke these lovely words, "God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on Him should not perish,

but have everlasting life." Nicodemus was deeply impressed, but he could not bring himself to believe that this working man from Galilee, although He had wrought miracles, could be the very Son of God.

Perhaps it was as the door was opened for him to go, and they looked out from the well-lit room into the dense darkness of the night, that Jesus uttered an awful warning: "This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil." Nicodemus went away from Jesus, who was the great light, back to the darkness of his own formal religion, but only for a time. The warning was not in vain.

Most of the people of Jerusalem were yet more blind than Nicodemus. Even those who admired Jesus were not ready to hear that He was the very Son of God, and had come to found a spiritual kingdom. So He went down into the country with His disciples and preached the message of the Baptist, saying, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." He saw that the preparation for the Messiah was not yet complete, and determined to complete it Himself. The people were

more ready for this simple message, and were won by the love and beauty of Him who taught. More and more came to Him, and He bade His disciples baptize them. If He had baptized them Himself they would have thought Him another John the Baptist, when He was, as you know, the Son of God and the long-looked-for Christ.

But as the crowds grew, the Pharisees became uneasy, and began to plan to cripple His work. So, having stirred the people and prepared them to receive a fuller message, He set out for Galilee.

CHAPTER XVII

JESUS AND THE WOMAN OF SAMARIA

JESUS constantly surprised the Jews and even His close friends by His words and deeds. For His thoughts were God's thoughts and His ways God's ways. His fellow-men were too narrow and selfish to think as He thought and to love as He loved. On His way to Galilee from Jerusalem He surprised His disciples very much.

The strictest Jews never took the shortest way to Galilee, which lay through the little province of Samaria. They always went round by the Jordan. That was like going from London to Liverpool through Wales. They took the roundabout road, because they had a long-standing quarrel with the Samaritans.

Five hundred years before Jesus came, when

the Jews returned from exile, the Samaritans wanted to help in building a new temple at Jerusalem. But the Jews would not have their help, for the parents of some of them had been heathen. So the Samaritans built a temple of their own, and hated the Jews. They had often quarrelled since. Once the Jews destroyed their chief town, and when Jesus was a young man some Samaritans entered the Temple of Jerusalem and defiled it with dead men's bones. But they worshipped the true God, and Jesus was too great and loving to be narrow or bitter. He loved the Samaritans as well as the Jews, and He took the short road to Galilee on His way back from Jerusalem.

In the middle of a December day He and His little band of friends came to a well under the shadow of Gerizim, on the flat summit of which the Samaritan temple stood. It was a famous well, made by Jacob more than a thousand years before, but the nearest town lay some distance off. Jesus was very tired, for it was now noontide, so He sat down by the well-side while His disciples went to buy some food. While He was looking down into its deep, cool recesses and wishing for a

drink, a Samaritan woman came to draw water. It was not the usual time, for most women drew water in the cool of the evening or of the morning. But she was shiftless, and had fallen low and had lost heart about life. On this day she discovered, after the sun was strong, that she had no water in her house, and she had to toil along the path in the noontide glare to get it.

When she at last reached the well, tired and out of temper with herself, she was not too pleased to see a Jew sitting there, and was astonished when He looked up and said in a pleasant voice, "Give Me to drink." She asked Him how could He, a Jew, ask water from a Samaritan like herself. She knew how her race was despised by the Jews, and felt ready for a quarrel. But Jesus pitied this sin-worn woman, and longed to teach her that He felt kindly towards her and could help her greatly. He answered :—

"If thou didst know the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give Me to drink; thou wouldst have asked of Him, and He would have given thee the living water." The woman thought He was speaking of a spring, and seeing that He

had no water-bottle with Him, she asked whence He had this living water. He told her that what He had to give quenched the thirst for ever, and was to each person who drank of it as "a well of water springing up to everlasting life." Here was the same thought that He had tried to teach Nicodemus, but He was expressing it differently. He was, of course, speaking of the thirst of the soul, but the woman, who was only intent on escaping the tiresome journey she was obliged to take every day, did not understand Him. She said, "Give me this water, that I thirst not, neither come hither to draw."

Then Jesus saw that she was thinking only of the needs of her body, and abruptly changed the conversation, saying, "Go, call thy husband." She answered shortly, almost sullenly, "I have no husband." God had given the knowledge Jesus needed to help this poor woman, and He answered, "Thou hast well said, I have no husband, for thou hast had five husbands, and he whom thou now hast is not thy husband." In a moment the woman understood that this was no ordinary man, for though a stranger whom she had never seen before, He knew all the details of her sinful life.

She exclaimed in wonder, "Sir, I perceive Thou art a prophet."

But she was not yet willing to show her sick heart, with its longing for real goodness in spite of all the failure and the sin, and once more she tried to draw Him into an argument about the Samaritan and Jewish temples. She began, "Our fathers worshipped in this mountain; and ye say, that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship." Then Jesus spoke some of the most wonderful words ever heard. He told her that soon there would be no place of worship more sacred than another, and that God, who is a Spirit, cares only that the spirits of those who worship Him should be utterly true.

Even when you are old and grey-headed you will not understand all that these words mean, but you cannot begin too soon to know them. This is what Jesus said: "Woman, believe Me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father. . . . But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship

Him. God is Spirit: and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and truth."

These lofty words seemed to the woman just such as the Messiah might speak, and she longed for the time when He should come. The Samaritans, too, looked for a Messiah, and, unlike the Jews, did not expect an earthly prince. They called the coming one the "Guide." Her thoughts rose to her lips and she said, "When the Messiah is come, which is called the Christ, He will tell us all things." Then Jesus saw that her heart was ready for the truth, and that she was thinking not of earthly greatness, but of one who should come with a message from God to the struggling souls of men. He said quite simply and plainly, "I that speak unto thee am He."

Can you understand a little what this meant to the woman? She had heard all her life of the great prophet Moses, and even when sin had eaten into her soul like a dreadful leprosy, and she was filled with self-despising, she still clung to her religion and its hopes. Suddenly one day, when she had gone, tired and discontented, in the mid-day sun to draw water, a Man who sat beside the well had looked with clear and loving eyes

into her very heart, and then had quietly declared, "I am greater than the greatest prophet; I that speak unto thee am the Christ."

At that moment the disciples arrived back with the food they had bought. When they saw Him speaking with a woman they were amazed. The Jewish rabbis taught that women were inferior to men, and that no man should ever speak to a woman in the street, not even to his own wife. But the disciples dared not question Him, and they offered Him food. He answered, "I have meat to eat that ye know not," and when they looked puzzled, He explained, "My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me." His soul was fed and satisfied because He had been able to bring comfort to a troubled heart. He was speaking of the better food, as He had done when Satan tempted Him to turn stones into bread.

Just then He saw the people pouring out of the town and hurrying towards Him. The woman had left her water-pot and had hastened to her town-folk, saying, "Come, see a man who told me all things that ever I did. Can this be the Christ?" Jesus saw the eager look in the people's faces, and

knew that many of them would believe on Him, and He exclaimed :—

“Do you not say, There are four months, and then cometh the harvest? Behold, I say unto you, Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields, that they are ripe already to the harvest.” The corn would not be ready for reapers till April, but here was a great spiritual harvest to be reaped in the souls of those who were so ready to be taught.

Jesus stayed two days in this city, and taught the people about God and the kingdom of heaven. Many of the people believed that He was the Messiah because the woman declared He had told her all things that ever she did. It was not a miracle that could be seen with the eyes that convinced them, but a miracle of the mind. Many more believed that He was the Messiah because of His beautiful and tender teaching. They said to each other that this must indeed be the Guide they had so long expected.

He never returned to preach in Samaria, for He had come to teach the Jews and prepare them to carry His great tidings to all men, and, as you will hear, the time was very short for this work. After He had returned to His Father, His

disciples came and taught in this province, and found many hearts ready to receive His message.

Thus Jesus made Himself known to a woman, even though she was sinful. It is He who has lifted women out of the position of drudges and has taught men to honour them. He has shown us, too, that even dark sins can be no barrier to His forgiveness and love if there is still a longing after goodness, and we learn to trust Him. Where there is a little shame, however hidden away, His love may still enter in and make the stained soul clean.

This was a woman of the common people, despised by many, and most of all by herself. We do not even know her name. But the angels of God must hold her in higher honour than a great queen, for our Lord made Himself known to her while His glory was still veiled from so many.

CHAPTER XVIII

HOW JESUS HEALED THE SICK AND BECAME FAMOUS

THE greater part of a year had passed since Jesus was baptized, and He was still only known to a small number of people. As you have heard, most of the time had been spent quietly in Judæa. He had worked a few miracles, some men had become interested in Him, and His disciples had baptized a good many people. But it was not until He returned to Galilee the second time that He became really famous. It was not His preaching which made people flock to Him in multitudes, although His words were gentle as the dew, and bright as the sunlight, and searching as the wind from the snows of Mount Hermon. It was His wonderful deeds of healing that made His name fly from village to village throughout Galilee.

There were many who were always ill in that land, and many who were maimed for life. Some were blind, some dumb, some stone deaf. Some had withered arms, others were lame, and a few were paralysed—unable to lift hand or foot. Some were lepers. There were no hospitals in those days, and the doctors were ignorant and unskilled; for it is only in Christian lands that homes of healing and men properly trained to care for the sick are found. Into the midst of this crowd of sufferers Jesus came like an angel of light. He cured all who sought His aid, and often He healed sore hearts as well by His tender sympathy. The Jews had read how the ancient prophets had worked some miracles, but they had never heard of one who was so kind and patient and powerful in delivering people from suffering. They could not help admiring the Great Healer. It was no wonder, for the like has never been seen before or since. Wherever He went crowds flocked to Him. Many stories of His compassion and healing power have been preserved for us.

The lepers were perhaps the saddest of all the sad sights in that land. They suffered from a dreadful disease of the skin and the bones, which

made them hideous to see and dangerous to touch. When any one was discovered with the fatal spot which showed that leprosy had begun, he was compelled to leave his home and friends and live with those in like misery outside the towns and villages. He was only allowed to enter a town when he wished to go to the Synagogue services, and there he had to sit by himself behind a rail as if he were accursed. If he met people, and they came near to him, he had to cry out "Unclean, unclean," so that they might not touch him. And leprosy was very rarely cured. It was a living death.

It was some time before any of the lepers sought healing from Jesus. But one day He was on a country road, away from the town in which He lived, and a leper drew near, kneeling before Him, and beseeching Him to cleanse him. He had heard of Jesus' power to help the sick, and felt sure that the Great Healer could remove even his fell disease. In an agony of longing he cried out, "If Thou wilt, Thou canst make me clean."

Jesus was moved to compassion at the dreadful sight. This man was most of all to be pitied because an outcast. So the first thing the Lover

of men did, was to lay His hand upon the leper. It was the first time that foul skin had felt the touch of a clean human hand since the dark day when the leprous spot had appeared. The kind pressure made him feel that he was still a man, not merely a blot on the face of the earth and a poison to his family. Then Jesus made him whole by saying only a word or two—"I will; be thou clean." Immediately the leper's skin became like a little child's, and the horrible sores in his body healed. What a blessed change for him! Many a time he had wished himself dead. Now the air was sweet to him once more, and his home open to him. It was only one with the power of God who could work so great a wonder in so simple a way.

And yet the leper was not rightly grateful, for he disobeyed Jesus. He went everywhere, telling people how he had been healed by a touch and two words. This was just what Jesus had told him not to do, in case the crowds which gathered to see the wonder-worker should become so large that He could not teach or help them. By the leper's disobedience He had to go out into the open country, and even there people came from

all quarters. Strange, was it not, that this man did not obey his Helper? Alas, so many of us wish to honour Jesus in our own way, rather than in His!

Not long after this, Jesus gave a still clearer sign of His power and love. It was in Capernaum, a city on the Lake of Galilee. One day He was teaching on the shore of the lake when Jairus, a leading man in the town, was seen elbowing his way through the crowd. He fell on his knees before Jesus, and besought Him to come quickly and heal his daughter, who was at the point of death. Jesus set out at once, but was so hindered by the people, who clung about Him and selfishly blocked the way, that He could only go very slowly.

As He passed by, a woman who had been ill for twelve years pressed towards Him, although half smothered in the throng. She had spent all her little fortune in trying various remedies, but had only become worse. She had come to an end of her hopes and her possessions. Then rumour reached her of this great Healer; and she had watched the love in Jesus' face that morning, and had said to herself, "If I can but touch the

hem of His garment, I shall be made whole." So in the midst of the struggling multitude, when men and women were pressing close to Jesus on every side, she thrust out a timid hand to touch the tassel of His cloak, and as she touched it, she felt that her disease had left her.

You must not think that the clothes of Jesus had any magical power in them. The poor woman was superstitious to think so. But the good God has mercy on all who believe in His dear Son, whether their faith is perfectly wise or not; therefore the mere touch of His robe, though just the same as any other robe, had made her whole, because her act was full of trust in Himself. Jesus knew that some one had been healed by Him, for He felt it. Turning quickly, He said, "Who touched My garments?"

His disciples, who with all their love and reverence for their Master, were sometimes very fond of trying to put Him right, said, "Thou seest the multitude thronging Thee, and sayest Thou, Who touched me?" But the woman, trembling lest He should be displeased, fell down before Him, and openly declared what had happened. All He desired was to comfort her and

strengthen her faith. "Daughter," He said, using a tender word, "Daughter, thy faith hath made thee whole ; go in peace."

All this time Jairus had been waiting in an agony of impatience. He suffered tortures as the moments sped past. It seemed hours since he had left his daughter's bedside. Just as he saw Jesus once more moving on, a messenger hurried to his side, saying, "Thy daughter is dead ; trouble not the Master." Jesus, seeing the bitter grief in his face, comforted him, saying, "Fear not ; only believe."

At last the slow journey was ended, and Jesus entered the house, allowing only His three closest friends, Peter and James and John, to come with Him. What a scene greeted His eyes ! The room was full of hired mourners, shrieking, and tearing their hair, and beating their breasts. Jesus said, "Why make ye a tumult, and weep ? the child is not dead, but sleepeth." At this the people, who had hushed their clamour to hear what He would say, laughed aloud in scorn. Sleep ! As if they did not know death when they saw it. But Jesus, with that dignity which so often awed the crowd, put them all out of the

house, and then He and His three friends, and the father and mother, went into the room where the maiden lay.

There lay the body, silent and wan, and the heart quite still. But Jesus took the little hand in His and said two words, "Talitha cumi." They must have been familiar words to her, for many a Jewish mother would waken her little child from sleep by whispering them in her ear. They mean "Maiden, arise"; but there is a special tenderness about the first word, so that we understand them better if they are translated, "Little lamb, get up." Jesus chose these words that they might sound like her mother's voice arousing her on a sunlit morning; and with the warm pressure of His hand on hers her spirit returned, and she awoke from that death-hour without fear.

Immediately she arose from her pallet as though she had never been ill, and her parents were so amazed that they stood motionless. But Jesus, always thoughtful for others' needs, bade them give her food; for in her sickness she had eaten little, and was weak and hungry. Then, bidding them tell no man what He had done, He passed forth to His work again.

There were some sick people whom Jesus could not help, because they did not believe on Him. It was very sad that in His own town of Nazareth He could heal very few, for so many would not believe that He was anything more than the carpenter who had mended their cart-wheels and ox-yokes for them. But wherever people longed and struggled to believe, He was pitiful and helped their weak faith.

Once, on the other side of the Lake of Galilee, after His own fellow-countrymen had deserted Him, there was brought to Him one who had always been deaf, and whose tongue was tied. Jesus took him aside from the crowd, and put His fingers into his ears, and spat on the ground, and touched his tongue, and looking up, He sighed, and said, "Ephphatha," which means "Be opened." Do you wonder why Jesus did these strange things? There was a good reason for them. The poor man was bewildered by the crowd, and shy, as so many infirm people are, so Jesus led him aside, where he could be quiet and come to himself. Then, as the man was deaf, and could not understand what was about to happen, He showed him by signs the blessing he would receive. By

putting His fingers in the man's ears, Jesus showed him that he would hear at last, and by spitting, and touching the man's tongue, that it would be loosened. Thus He awakened faith in that dull mind, which was as if in prison, and when the man saw the lips of Jesus move, he understood what was being said, and was able to receive the gifts of speech and hearing.

And you do not need to be told why Jesus sighed. He thought of the long dreary years this man had spent, and of all the souls that were imprisoned by deafness and blindness and sickness, and was filled with a great pity. I think the sigh of Jesus tells us more of what He felt than many words.

All the people were beyond measure astonished, saying, "He hath done all things well: He maketh even the deaf to hear, and the dumb to speak."

It was in this fashion that Jesus became famous.

CHAPTER XIX

JESUS REJECTED BY HIS OWN FOLK

You have already heard that Jesus was able to heal very few people in Nazareth, and you must be surprised that His fellow-citizens did not trust Him when He had lived for so many years among them. They had known Him as a boy, running errands for Joseph, and as a youth, when He was an apprentice in the carpenter's shop, and as a man, when He carried on the business for the sake of His mother and His brothers and sisters. They had never seen Him look or speak or act so that they could accuse Him of the smallest sin. To many of them He had been very kind ; with all of them He had been patient. And yet they drove Him away, so that He had to make His home in another town. It happened in this way.

Just when the fame of Jesus was beginning to

spread throughout Galilee, He came to the Synagogue at Nazareth one Sabbath Day. How familiar the simple building looked to Him ! There, behind the little curtain, at the end which looked towards Jerusalem, was the chest containing the rolls of Scripture, from which portions were read at each service. Close to this were placed the little platform where the reader stood, and the raised seats for the elders, the chief of whom was called the Ruler of the Synagogue. A lattice-work division shut off the part of the hall where the women sat, and where His mother had taken her place for many years. Among the men were the well-known faces of His old customers and neighbours.

There was a stir in the congregation when Jesus entered and took His seat, not among the listeners, but near the reading-desk. All the people expected Him to speak that day, and He was ready to address them. For you must know that in a synagogue there was no clergyman nor regular preachers, only a reader or clerk who could interpret the ancient Hebrew in which the Scriptures were written, and any one who was known to have the gift of explaining what was read, was allowed to speak. Rumours had reached Nazareth

of Jesus teaching the people in other places, and quite naturally He was asked to speak when He reappeared in the Synagogue where He had worshipped so long.

After the first lesson had been read from the Books of Moses, and certain prayers had been said, the reader handed to Him the roll of the prophets. He rose and unrolled the parchment from the one rod, and rolled it up again on the other, until He found the place in the Book of the prophet Isaiah where it is written: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me; because He anointed Me to preach good tidings to the poor; He hath sent Me to proclaim release to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord." Then He abruptly closed the roll, and handed it to the attendant and sat down.

It was the custom to read not less than three verses, but had He gone on, the next words would have been, "The day of vengeance is at hand," and our Lord wished to give a message of peace and love. How well His hearers knew those words! They all understood that the beautiful picture referred to the Messiah. Through the

centuries they had been read, and had kept the hopes of the nation living and strong.

Every eye was fastened on Jesus, for it was the custom for the preacher to sit, and they knew He had not finished. The Synagogue grew strangely still. There was no sound save the low breathing of the people and the hum of a wandering bee.

At last He spoke: "To-day hath this Scripture been fulfilled in your ears." He went on to show that He was the Friend of the poor, the Helper of those in trouble, and the Deliverer of souls that were chafed and sore with the chains of sin and blind to the goodness of God. He was surely saying quite plainly, "I am the long-expected One." The worshippers in the synagogues did not remain quiet as we do in church, but sometimes talked to each other about the sermon, and would even interrupt the speaker with questions or contradictions.

At first, as they listened to the voice of Jesus, they were delighted, for it was as gentle as the quiet rain, as moving as the sound of the wind in the trees, and as musical as the throbbing of the strings of a harp. Careworn faces grew bright as the thought stole upon them that the

great Leader of the nation would be the most tender and helpful of all men. They were held as by a spell. It was as if the new kingdom had already begun. The bare walls of the Synagogue seemed to vanish, and they were transported to a land of radiance and rest.

But as their thoughts returned to earth, they remembered that the speaker was the carpenter whose little workshop was only a few yards down the street. It was not to be believed that this was God's Anointed One. They began to say to themselves, "But is not this Joseph's son?" and so forth, and Jesus saw the growing distrust. To His searching eyes it was plain that even thirty years of stainless holiness were not enough to convince these old acquaintances that He was at least worthy to be the chosen messenger of God. Because of their want of faith He had been able to heal but a few sick among them. Now that He declared Himself the Messiah, they only returned again to the fact that they knew His family and He had worked in their midst.

He began to warn them plainly that they were blind to a truth that had been before them for years. Perhaps some of them were quoting sneeringly a

proverb of the time, for He took it up and answered it with another proverb :—"Doubtless you say unto Me, Physician, heal thyself: whatsoever we have heard done at Capernaum, do also here in thine own country. Verily I say unto you, No prophet is acceptable in his own country."

Then in solemn words He reminded them how the prophets their forefathers had rejected had done their greatest miracles for strangers. Elijah had blessed the oil and meal of a woman of Sidon, and Elisha had cleansed from leprosy Naaman the Syrian. Jesus was not able to say more. Already some had thought Him a blasphemer for claiming to be the Christ, and now that He rebuked them, their anger grew to fury. The men leapt from their seats, and dragging Him from His chair, hurried Him out to a rocky crag a little way above the town. There they meant to murder Him, by hurling Him over the precipice and heaping stones upon Him. Stoning was the punishment for blasphemy.

When Jesus saw their purpose, He turned upon them. A chill fell upon each angry heart as His calm gaze met their eyes. Perhaps the remembrance of past kindness checked them. His

fearless greatness impressed them. Hand after hand loosened its grasp on His garments. He passed through the midst of them and took the way to Capernaum. Henceforth that should be His city.

It was a bitter moment for Jesus. His old playmates, neighbours and friends would none of Him. The people who ought to have known Him best, understood Him least. As He left the valley, did He turn for a last glance at the little town, still noisy with angry outcry, where He had spent so many peaceful years? If so, it was His farewell look. It does not appear that He ever returned. Those who knew Him less, who scarcely knew Him at all, trusted Him, and were healed and gladdened and made welcome to the heavenly places, but Nazareth was blind. Those who hear most of Jesus may come to doubt Him most and to love Him not at all, and Jesus is as well-known in England to-day as He was in Nazareth when He was driven from its doors.

But in Capernaum friends were waiting for Him, and there His work could be better done. It was a beautiful and fertile spot. The ground fell so swiftly from the high hills to the lake-shore



Photograph Co., Ltd.

TIBERIAS AT THE PRESENT DAY.

From a Photograph.

that all manner of fruit-trees were found within a distance of a few miles. Walnut groves lay on the higher ground, the vines and fig-trees were so luxuriant that their fruit could be eaten for ten months of the year, and palm-trees grew near the water's edge. The plain of Gennesaret was like one vast garden. To-day, although the trees have almost vanished, the gay pink blossoms of the oleander and the feathery fronds of the maidenhair fern make the water-courses beautiful.

Before the town stretched the sparkling blue waters of the lake, constantly flecked with white sails. For it was not the beauty of the land which brought Jesus there, but the crowds of people. Nine towns were washed by the waves of this little sea, each of them with not less than fifteen thousand people. The great road from Damascus brought a constant stream of travellers, and the warm baths at the south of the lake drew people from all the surrounding lands. The boat-builders were busy in their yards; the fish-curiers sent out hundreds of barrels every year, and the dried fish of Taricheæ were known as a luxury as far off as Egypt. This district was as crowded as South Wales or Lancashire.

But one part of the lake Jesus never visited, although a mighty city stood there. It had a great palace, and beautiful temples to heathen gods, built of precious marbles by Greek craftsmen; but in it He could do no work, for there were no Jews—or only a few who had been compelled to settle there. This city of Tiberias was built by Herod, and its foundations laid in a burying-ground, so that it was called “unclean” by Jesus’ countrymen. It still stands to-day, the home of fever and pestilence, when of Capernaum and Bethsaida we can find no certain trace.

One picture is given us out of the busy months He spent while living with Peter.

It is evening, and the Sabbath is just over, for, as you know, the Jews count their days from sunset to sunset. As the last rays of the sun vanish, and the afterglow melts from orange to purple on the hilltops above the eastern shore, the people bring their sick on their light pallet-beds and lay them at the door of a house in a humble street. There, as the stars rush out and the evening breeze rises, Jesus lays His cool hands on fevered brows and gives back health. He lifts the lame man to his feet, so that he leaps for joy.

The eyes of the blind are opened to see the soft light of the moon tracing a path of silver upon the dark surface of the water.

Those who were sick break into songs of joy, and men fall at His feet and kiss the hem of His garments. Not till the last sufferer is relieved, and the crowd slowly melts away, can Jesus lay Himself to rest, full of gladness in the relief of others, but longing with how deep a desire to lift men out of their worst sorrows and to give them the new life from above.

CHAPTER XX

WHAT JESUS TAUGHT THE PEOPLE

ALTHOUGH Jesus became famous because He healed the sick, He did not consider this part of His work the most important. He knew that the diseases of the soul are far worse than those of the body. He saw that the souls of some were lame or withered, so that they could not do the good they faintly wished to do. Some were blind or deaf in heart and mind, so that they did not see the light of truth or hear the message of love. Sin had so eaten into the souls of others that they were like lepers in His eyes, for their thoughts were foul and their desires corrupt. These were the most miserable of all. His great work was to heal these souls that were sick with sin. His wonderful deeds of healing were just a way of showing and proving His love and power. They

are like the pictures in a story. The pictures attract us, and we look at them first, but every one knows that they are not the most important part of a book.

The great difficulty which Jesus met when He sought to heal people of sin was their mistaken thoughts about duty and holiness. The part of their Bible which they liked best was the first five books, which were called the Law. These books contain not only the Ten Commandments, but also many directions about sacrifices and the right way in which to worship God in the tabernacle or temple.

Certain men made it their business to copy out the books of the Bible, and especially the books of the Law, so that every little synagogue might have a copy. They were called the scribes, which means the "writers," and were very important people, forming a class or caste which was much honoured by the nation. For they not only copied the sacred writings but explained them. They professed to find rules for every detail of daily life, and in this way many new laws had grown up which were not really in these books. Exact regulations were laid down

about eating and fasting, washing and dressing, and how to keep the Sabbath. These rules, which were known as the "tradition of the elders," had never been written down, but were remembered and taught by the scribes to their pupils.

The Jews who kept these unwritten laws most carefully were considered the holiest, and people had come to think more of an outward show of piety than of real goodness of heart. It was just as though a schoolgirl or schoolboy thought sitting in a certain way and sharpening pencils after a particular fashion more important than understanding the lesson. You can imagine how to those who were poor and struggling these rules became a burden that could hardly be borne. There was so much to do and think about if hard-working folk were to live at all. They only became more weary and disheartened when they learnt all that their religion required of them. To many, although the thought was hidden, God must have seemed a hard taskmaster.

But Jesus and His disciples did not obey the tradition of the elders. He openly taught that God did not care about such things. Many of the strictest Jews were afraid of such teaching, but the

common people therefore heard Him very gladly. They felt like children who had been compelled all their life to walk along hot and dusty roads, shut in by high fences, and were now allowed to take a path over the green meadows, and to pick the flowers growing by the wayside.

And there was something about Jesus' way of teaching which compelled people to listen. The scribes were afraid to say anything new, and always tried to help inquirers by remembering what some older scribe had said. They were never so proud as when compared to cisterns which never let a drop escape, and their teaching was like the water in such cisterns, very dull and lifeless. But the words of Jesus were like a spring that bubbled and sparkled, clear and cool, in the sunshine.

The scribes hesitated to guide people when they could not find an exact rule in the Law and the tradition, or when two great masters had taught differently on some point. To listen to them was like groping along dark passages step by step; but to listen to Jesus was like walking in a house with many windows full of light. For He spoke with authority and in His own name. Even when He quoted the Law, He sometimes added,

"But *I* say unto you," putting His own words highest. His voice sounded to the consciences of His hearers like the voice of God. And so it was. It was so strange and beautiful to hear Him speaking of God's love, and of the fields and the flowers, that people flocked to hear Him, whether He taught in the Temple courts, or in the open country, or by the lakeside.

It was in what we call the Sermon on the Mount that Jesus taught some of the most important things about the Law. We think He spoke on a hill lying about ten miles west of Capernaum, to which the people had gathered to hear Him. There they sat in the hollow between two peaks, seeing only the blue sky, with the birds hovering above them, and the stony hilltops which, if it were spring, would be carpeted with anemones and lilies.

He began by speaking about the kind of holiness which God loved and which made people really happy. It was not a matter of little rules, but of meekness and purity and mercy and longing for righteousness. But He made plain that He had not come to destroy the old law of Moses, but rather to make it more full of meaning. It was to

be obeyed more completely than ever, for men were to rule their thoughts by it as well as their actions. He pointed out that not only a murderer, but also any one who had wished in his heart for another's death, had broken the commandment which says, "Thou shalt not kill." Even actions which every one thought very good, such as prayer and almsgiving, He declared to be of no avail if only done for display. All was to be done for the love of God. Then as He saw some angry faces look out at Him from the crowd, He spoke words of comfort to His followers. If suffering should come to them for His sake, let them rejoice, for their reward should be great. They must not be anxious about anything, for God who gave the lilies their lovely raiment would care for His own people.

There was one word which came again and again in the sermon, and was like a great diamond flashing among smaller jewels. It was a beautiful new name for God—a name which we now know very well, but which the Jews scarcely knew and never used. Almost always when Jesus spoke of God He called Him "the Father," or "your heavenly Father," or "the Father in heaven." God was

not the Father of His disciples in the same sense as He was His own Father, for, as you remember, Jesus was the only Son of God, and had come from heaven.

But He wanted to teach them not to think of God as a far-off king or a stern judge, but as One whose love and patience and tenderness were infinitely greater than any earthly father ever felt for his child. He said, "If ye, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask Him?" It must have been wonderful to hear Jesus say these words, "How much more!" They seemed as high as the heaven and as deep as the sea, and made God's love the greatest thing in the world.

But though the people flocked to hear this new Rabbi, whose preaching was so different from that of the scribes, they had grown accustomed through long years to the old way of thinking, and were slow to change. It was true that He took away the burden of the tradition, but He bade them be pure and holy; and though people desire to have their bodies healed, they often cling to the disease of the soul. And there was one part of His teach-

ing which they did not understand. He often spoke of the "kingdom of heaven." Now they all thought they knew what these words meant. Israel used to be God's kingdom, and for their sins they had lost their own king and were now ruled by foreigners. But when the Messiah should come, He would conquer their oppressors and make His nation the greatest empire of the world. In speaking of the blessed future, they always talked of *the kingdom of heaven* coming to them.

But Jesus did not seem to mean what they meant. For He never spoke of revenge and riches and conquest. He seemed to say that those who were humble and forgiving and childlike belonged to that kingdom. Truly Jesus did not mean what the people meant, for He said, "The kingdom of heaven is within you." The throne He spoke of must be raised in the soul, not in a palace. In each heart that obeyed His law of love perfectly, He was king and there was the kingdom.

So after Jesus had taught multitudes of people for some months, it became very plain that they were not willing to understand what He meant by the good news of the kingdom. And the worst of it was, that many persuaded themselves that they

did understand Him. In spite of His strange sayings, they expected Him some day to arm them and to lead them on to victory. So He began to teach them more and more by parables. A parable is a story with two meanings: one meaning on the surface, and one meaning only plain to thoughtful people. These parables were very easily remembered, and were so interesting that the people could not help listening; and yet earnest hearers knew that they meant more than they seemed to mean. They provoked people to think. They were at once robes, which made His teaching more lovely, and veils, which compelled careless listeners to pause and consider the hidden thought.

The parables of Jesus perplexed the people. But it was really kind of Him to use them. For there is nothing worse than to think we understand when we do not understand. We are then like people who have taken the wrong road, but keep on going farther and farther away from home, because we think it is the right one. Jesus sought to compel the people to know that they did not understand Him. If they were really humble they would then come to Him, and ask to be taught plainly what He meant.

The first of Jesus' parables was spoken by the lakeside, where so many people had crowded to hear Him that He had once more to go into a boat to speak to them. Some preachers might have been filled with joy at seeing such a multitude, but I think the words He spoke came from a sad heart. He was thinking how few would carry away any lasting good. He told them the parable of the sower. The farmer scattering the seed was a familiar figure, and perhaps even at that moment he was seen on the slope of the hill. A flock of birds would hover above to pick up the grains that fell on the hard footpaths crossing the fields, and here and there would be patches of young thorn bushes. In places the rock would show through the soil.

"Behold," said Jesus, "a sower went forth to sow; and as he sowed, some fell by the wayside, and the birds devoured them at once: others fell on the thin soil, and sprang up quickly, because the rock underneath grew hot with the sun, but they died for lack of earth in which to take root: and others fell upon the thorny ground, and took root; but the thorns grew up more swiftly than they, and choked them: and others fell upon the deep clean

soil, and they yielded fruit. Some had ears with a hundred grains, some had sixty, and some only thirty." Then He added, "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear." That was like underlining a sentence in a book, or setting up a finger-post to prevent one missing the right road. It meant that to hear in a right way was not so easy as it seemed, and that it was possible to miss the meaning of His parable.

When He was alone with His friends they asked Him to explain His story. He said: "The seed is My teaching, and the different kinds of ground are the different hearts that receive it. Some are like the footpaths, quite hard because of indifference. As soon as they hear the message, Satan comes like a swift bird and takes the word out of their memories. Others are like the thin soil on the rock. As soon as the good news reaches them they welcome it, but their minds are shallow and they have no steadfastness. When they are persecuted, they become discouraged and fall away. Others are like the soil in the thorny ground. They receive the word, and persecution would only make them more determined; but the cares of home, and the desire to be rich, and the

longing for things they have not, choke the good teaching, and there is no fruit seen in their lives. Others are like the good soil. They hear the message, and hold to it, and put it foremost in their thoughts. They bear good fruit; some more, some less."

Perhaps you think that every hearer would feel compelled to do what Jesus asked when His eyes shone with appealing love, and His words were so true and kind. But it was not so. Though they had ears, they did not learn how to hear. They did not hear with their mind. They admired Jesus, but they did not want to be of His way of thinking. As He preached, day after day, He was like the sower He had pictured; for most of His words fell into careless or cowardly or worldly hearts. Only here and there were found the true and the humble, who were ready to give up all for the Lover of their souls, the Son of God.

CHAPTER XXI

HOW JESUS WELCOMED SINNERS

IN the busy towns of Galilee there were a good many men and women of whom respectable people were ashamed. Some lived shameful lives of open wickedness. They were sometimes rich and sometimes beautiful, but no decent persons would invite them to their houses. They went by the name of "sinners," as if there were no other sinners in the world.

Others who lived in disgrace were tax-gatherers or publicans, like Matthew. They had to take toll on the fish or wine which passed into the towns, and to collect other taxes. Some of them were honest, but many cheated whenever they could by making too large a charge; but whether honest or not, they were looked on as traitors by the Pharisees, because the taxes were

collected for foreigners. No gifts for the Temple were received from them. The synagogues were open even to lepers, but were closed against them. They were made outcasts.

Can you understand how hopeless these people felt? Even if quite respectable, it was very difficult to keep all the rules of religion and yet do one's business; but when a man was branded as a sinner, and considered past saving by all religious people, it seemed no good trying to be better. Yet in the hearts of many of those who lived wickedly, there sometimes arose a wild desire to change, if only they knew how. But it quickly died down when, a moment later, they met a Pharisee, who crossed the road to avoid touching their clothes.

But Jesus loved these sinful people, and knew that they sometimes longed to be pure as little children. He loved them more because they needed Him so much. And He never despaired of them, for He was stronger than Satan, who had bound them in chains of evil habit. So whenever He had an opportunity He spoke to them, and they came to understand that He was not ashamed to be seen in their company, although His life was

so different from theirs. Indeed, as you have heard, He went so far as to choose a tax-gatherer for one of His disciples, and through this follower many others in the same business came to hear Him. Because of this, His enemies gave Him a nickname, and called Him "the Friend of publicans and sinners." But Jesus was not disturbed by their sneers, for, as He once said, a doctor is not needed by people who are quite well, but by the sick, and He did not come to help those that were already righteous, but those who were sinful.

As these outcasts of the nation grew to know Him better, they began to have hope—not because He made light of their sins, but because they felt He loved them. They had never known how really offensive in God's sight they were until they saw the pure eyes of Jesus rest upon them ; but at the same time they desired as never before to be pure as He was, for they longed to please Him. His purity wakened their consciences, and His love for them gave them courage. One by one they left their old hateful life and became His friends.

This is the story of the way in which Jesus comforted a woman who was sorry for her sins.

One of the Pharisees asked Him to dinner, and

the invitation was accepted. But when He arrived at the house, His host seemed half ashamed to have asked Him, and treated Him differently from other guests. They were received with a kiss, just as we should shake hands; water was brought to wash their dusty feet, for, of course, they wore only sandals; if distinguished guests, their heads were anointed with oil. Jesus was allowed to take His place without even an ordinary welcome. He said nothing, but He could not help noticing such rudeness. The guests did not sit at table as we do, but reclined on seats which were placed sideways. Each leaned on the table with his left arm, and fed himself with his right hand, having his feet stretched out behind him. According to the Eastern custom at that time, the house was open to any who cared to enter from the street, whether a friend of the host's or not.

Presently a woman, who was well-known as one of the "sinners" of the town, stole in and stood behind Jesus. She carried in her hand a costly gift, an alabaster box of ointment which was very precious. She longed to honour this Teacher, who was like a kind elder brother. She had heard His words of pity and of hope. They

had filled her with love for Him and hatred of her evil life.

Hearing that He was going to dine in the house of Simon the Pharisee, she determined to seek Him there. But as she stood humbly in His pure presence, the thought of her sin rose up and overpowered her. She remembered how she had once been an innocent child, and her tears flowed in a passion of weeping, and fell like rain on the tired and dusty feet of our Saviour. She knelt and wiped them with her long hair, for she felt no service done to Him was too mean for her. Then she kissed them, as men kiss the feet of a great king, and, breaking the box, poured the precious ointment out like common oil. Such a fragrant perfume was only used to anoint the heads of princes, but she lavished it on the feet of Jesus, for He was more than king or prince to her.

But the Pharisee was disgusted, and said to himself, "This proves that this man is no prophet. Had He superior knowledge, He would know this woman is a bad character, and would not allow her to approach Him." Jesus read the Pharisee's thoughts, although unexpressed, and was angry at his cold-heartedness and shallow self-conceit. He

could not bear that this woman's tears and penitence should be sneered at. Turning to His host He said, "Simon, I have somewhat to say unto thee." The conversation at the table ceased as Simon answered curtly, "Master, say on." Then Jesus told this story :

"A man had two debtors ; one owed him five hundred silver pence and the other fifty. Neither could pay anything, and he frankly forgave them both." Then He asked, "Tell Me, therefore, which of the debtors will love him most ?" Simon felt that the story might be turned against himself, and answered as indifferently as he could, "I suppose he to whom he forgave most." Jesus said, "Thou hast rightly judged." Then He turned from the table to the woman whose tears were scarcely dried, and said to the Pharisee, "Seest thou this woman ? I entered into thine house, thou gavest Me no water for My feet : but she hath washed My feet with tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head. Thou gavest Me no kiss : but this woman, since I came in, hath not ceased to kiss My feet. My head with oil thou didst not anoint : but this woman hath anointed My feet with ointment. Wherefore, I say unto

thee, Her sins, which are many, are forgiven ; for she loved much : but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little !”

Simon was overwhelmed at this public rebuke, and most of all because he was made to look disgraceful in comparison with a disreputable woman. He had not a word to say. The silence which followed was broken by Jesus saying gently to the woman, “Thy sins are forgiven.” The Pharisees broke out into open murmurs. Jesus had seemed to them from the beginning an upstart who took too much upon Himself, but they had never expected this. They whispered one to another, “Who is this that forgiveth sins also ?” For none but God can forgive sins. But the woman felt that Jesus had the right to pardon her, and that He knew how bad she had been. Her heart grew light. All the black, horrible past was forgiven, and she could come to God as if she were a pure little child again. But could it really be true ? Jesus knew how quickly a doubt would spring, so He spoke again, “Thy faith hath saved thee ; go in peace.”

As Jesus went on with His work, and the tax-gatherers and sinners gathered in greater numbers

to hear Him, the Pharisees became more and more displeased. One day Jesus sought to make them feel what He felt, and to teach them that He loved the outcasts just because they needed loving so much. He did not tell these people, who thought themselves so pious, that some of them were worse than the despised ones. He took them at their own valuation, and only tried to make them understand His pity. He told three parables.

First, the parable of the lost sheep. He pictured a fold at nightfall. The tired shepherd was counting the sheep as they went within its sheltering walls. One was missing. He could not sit down content, although only one was lost, but hurried back over the rugged paths to the different places where the flock had pastured that day. At last he found it, caught in the thorns, or far from the path on a rocky ledge, and trembling with fear. Then all his troubles were as nothing. He swung it on to his shoulder, and when he reached home, tired though he was, he could not help rousing his neighbours to hear his good news, saying, "Rejoice with me; for I have found the sheep that was lost." Then Jesus said to the

Pharisees, who were so anxious to save their souls that they drew back from the touch of a tax-gatherer, "I say unto you, That likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine righteous persons, which need no repentance."

Then He pictured a poor woman who had a little hoard of ten pieces of silver and lost one, She did not sit down content because most of the money was safe, but lit a candle and searched every corner of the room until at last she found it. Then she called her neighbours, who had heard of her loss, crying, "Found, found," and bade them rejoice with her. Again Jesus added, "Even so I say unto you, There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth."

But still the hard faces of the Pharisees showed no glimmer of sympathy, although the sinners who heard Jesus were weeping for joy. So He made one more attempt to make them feel what He felt. He tried to show them what the Father Himself felt towards the lost. This was the third parable :

A man had two sons, and when they were grown up, the younger begged to have his portion

of the property at once. The old man consented, and divided his possessions as he would have done at his death. The elder son stayed at home, but the younger son took all his money and went abroad. There he spent everything in feasting and drinking and gambling, until he had nothing left. His false friends melted away, and when a famine arose, the only work he could find was to herd swine—a task which the Jews think most degrading. He was often so hungry that he ate the coarse bean-pods on which the swine fed. At last he came to himself, and his past folly seemed like an evil dream. He thought of the old homestead, and how even the servants there were comfortably fed while he was almost dead with hunger. He laid aside his false pride, and admitted that he deserved all that had come upon him. He said, “I will arise, and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against Heaven, and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants.”

So he arose and went on his long journey. When he was yet a great way off, his father saw him and recognised him in his rags, footsore

and haggard with hunger. The old man ran to him, and fell on his neck, and kissed him again and again. And before the wanderer could finish his confession and ask to be made a servant in the old house, the father cried, "Bring the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his finger, and shoes on his feet." Then he ordered a great feast and that all should rejoice, for, said he, "My son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found."

The elder brother was out on the farm until late in the evening. When he heard the music and dancing he did not hurry in to join the merry-making, but called a servant and asked what it meant. When he heard that it was rejoicing over his brother's return, he was angry and would not go in. His father came out to entreat him, but he burst out, "Lo, these many years do I serve thee and never disobeyed; yet thou never gavest me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends; but now that this thy good-for-nothing son has returned, thou hast killed for him the fatted calf." But the father answered gently and tried to make him understand: "Son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine. It was

right that we should make merry and be glad : for this thy brother was dead, and is alive again ; and was lost, and is found.”

Jesus did not finish this story. He left the Pharisees to finish it for themselves, for, of course, the elder brother represented them, and the wandering son the sinners who were coming back to their heavenly Father.

But you will not wonder that the people loved to hear Jesus when He pictured God as a father full of love, longing to welcome every one who repented, and receiving them not with reproaches but with tenderness and joy. And when He Himself, who was pure as God, stood among them crying, “Come unto Me, all ye who are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest,” they could believe that His words about His Father were true. The love of God shone round them like the sunlight, and they knew that there was a welcome home for all who had strayed into the far country if only they cared to return.

CHAPTER XXII

HOW JESUS DRIED A WOMAN'S TEARS

IF you had met Jesus some morning as He went by dusty road or mountain path from village to village, telling the glad news that God had remembered His people, can you guess who would be walking with Him ?

Close to Him are three men, with faces bronzed by the sun and wind, and brawny arms half hidden by their floating robes. One has the wide, clear eyes of a poet or seer ; they change and deepen at the sound of his Master's voice, every tone of which is laden with meaning to his ears. This is John. Peter and James, who have so often spent dark nights by John's side, fishing on the Lake of Galilee, are by him still, following in the steps of the same Master, and eager to see and do. A little way behind, but within earshot, come the

other disciples, and among them Matthew, the tax-gatherer, with his keen, intelligent face, and slender fingers accustomed to hold the pen and handle coins. But besides these, there is a little group of women. Who are they?

Some of them are richly dressed, and find the rough roads hard for their feet. There is Susanna, of whom we know almost nothing, and Joanna, the wife of Herod's steward, and Mary Magdalene. They have all been healed by Jesus, and love to be near Him, to serve Him and to hear His words. His sisters are not there. I do not think they understood Jesus. Perhaps they were afraid to go against the people of their town, Nazareth, whence He had been thrust out.

Once, when He was speaking to a great crowd, and the people were jostling each other to get near Him, His mother and brothers tried to reach Him, but could not press through the throng. A message was brought that they wanted to see Him. He knew, however, that they had not come to help Him in His work, and that even His mother had not rightly understood God's purpose for Him. So He asked, "Who is My mother? and who are My brethren?" Then, pointing to His disciples, He

answered His own question, "Behold My mother and My brethren! For whosoever shall do the will of My Father which is in heaven, he is my mother, and sister, and brother." He did not mean to shut out His own family from His heart by these words, but He wanted them to know that His closest tie was to those who by faith and obedience were showing themselves true children of His Father in heaven.

Some of His relations did not believe that He was the Messiah, and others were dissatisfied because they could not feel that He was peculiarly their own. They were determined not to go into the company of publicans and sinners. But these women whom Jesus had healed, and to whom He had restored the sweetness and gladness of life, followed Him and served Him, never thinking they were lowering themselves. They took Him at His word, and were as His mothers and sisters.

Some of them had money, and this they gave to Jesus, that He and His disciples might have food and clothes; for this little band of men had now no time to earn anything, and were obliged to depend on the goodwill of those among whom they went.

A few disciples were able to give a little money of their own, but the common purse would have been very bare without gifts from friends. No doubt there were people who found fault with Jesus for taking money from women, and said it would have been better to preach less and still work at His old trade; but He was giving the world three golden years of holiness and truth, more precious than all its vast treasures, and in taking gifts from those whose lives He had transfigured, He was but adding a new joy.

Amongst them were women who had lost their reason, and others who had been possessed by evil spirits and knew no rest. Mary Magdalene was said to have been possessed by seven demons. You have never met any people who are troubled in this terrible way, but you can partly understand what it meant. For sometimes you hear of an evil man who has won complete control over some child or person of weak character, and compels them to do shameful things which they hate. But when he dies, or loses his power over them, these people that were his tools become quite kind and decent, and just like others. In the same way an unclean spirit took possession of a person's soul,

and made him like an unclean animal, cruel and shameless.

When Jesus the Beloved Son of God came to tread this earth and save the world, it seems as though every evil thing were stirred up to oppose Him. But He, by His love and pity and holiness, was able to overcome them all. Jesus most of all pitied the women whose souls were so tortured. Others turned away, shuddering in disgust and fear; but He gave the same welcome He had given to lepers, and drove out the evil spirit. No wonder that those He had saved from so hideous a life were devoted to Him, even when others fell away.

But He showed His deepest compassion to women when they had lost their best beloved. Every kind of sadness made Him sad, but He was most sorrowful when He saw mothers or sisters broken with grief. He brought back the dead to life only three times, and twice it seems to have been purely for the sake of women, the third time partly for a woman.

Once when He was entering a little city called Nain, which lay to the north of Nazareth, He met a solemn procession just leaving the gate. A great

crowd followed Him, but fully as many were coming towards Him. In an open coffin lay the body of a young man, wrapped in a linen robe, and with a napkin about his face. This was the only son of a woman who was a widow, and at his death the light of her life was quenched. Not only would she have to suffer the weariness of toil and poverty when she had looked for rest, but the love and honour and glory of her life had gone out in the darkness of her loss. Many of the townsfolk pitied her, and were giving her the poor comfort of adding their lamentations to hers.

It was the women who led the procession, and among them, bowed down and shedding the bitter tears of hopeless grief, was the lonely mother. She was remembering that other day when she had gone forth to bury her husband, but how much less dark than this, for then a son had been with her.

But through the wailing of music and the cries of mourners two words reached her ears, "Weep not." Who bade her cease to weep in such an hour? Through a mist of tears she saw a stranger in the simple dress of a working man. He had touched the bier, and the bearers stood still.

Again she heard the voice, but this time the words were not for her, "Young man, I say unto thee, Arise." And at this command her wondering eyes beheld a blessed change in the still form she loved. This was no mockery of her sorrow, for the spirit of the dead returned, and the young man sat up. She hardly dared to breathe, lest the dear vision should vanish. Speechless she stood till Jesus led the son she had lost to her arms.

Thus Jesus dried the bitter tears the lonely woman shed. He has been called the Man of Sorrows, and rightly, for He felt each sigh and tear and grief of those about Him. But there is another and sweeter name He once gave Himself—the Comforter; for He said before His death, "I will send you *another* Comforter." He was the Comforter at Nain that day, and to how many since?

There are some women who pray to the Mother of Jesus, for they think that only a woman can enter fully into their feelings and trials. They feel that they dare not tell their sad secrets to the Lord in heaven. But though Mary was so pure and loving and highly honoured, Jesus never taught that she has any power to help us, nor that

it is right to pray to her. Yet no girl need feel that He, because a man, cannot read her heart and interpret all she cannot tell Him. The women of His day trusted Him as they would trust a perfectly wise and tender mother. They found that He never misunderstood, and could always help them. He is still the same. Because He is so much more than man, He feels and comforts as only a woman can.

CHAPTER XXIII

THE DEATH OF JOHN THE BAPTIST

YOU may have wondered whether John the Baptist was ever jealous of Jesus. Very early, as you know, some of his friends had left him to follow this new prophet, and when they also began to baptize in Judæa, and the people flocked to them, the crowds about John dwindled. Some of the Baptist's disciples pointed this out, for they feared that he was losing his influence. If they expected him to be discouraged, they did not really know him. John heard the news with joy and thankfulness, for was not this a further proof that here indeed was the Lamb who should take away the sin of the world? He cared nothing for his own glory, and reminded them of his words when he taught by the Jordan, that he was not the Christ, and they must look for the coming of one greater than he.

Then he compared himself to a friend of the bridegroom rejoicing in his joy ; and it was without a shadow of bitterness that he added, "He must increase, and I must decrease." He would have returned joyful, though alone, to the barren wilderness, content to know that those he had striven to prepare were following the Christ. There was never a nobler and more unselfish soul than John the Baptist.

But he was not to spend his last days in the solitude of the rocks among which he had prayed and longed for the coming of the Messiah, but in the solitude of a prison.

Herod, the ruler of Galilee and the land beyond Jordan which they called Peræa, had taken his brother's wife, Herodias, to live with him, and John, who feared only God, had openly rebuked him for the sin, and was cast into prison.

We think it was in a dungeon of the Castle of Machærus, overlooking the intense blue water of the Dead Sea, that he lay, month after month, thankful for the visits of his disciples, who were allowed to see him and bring him news of the outer world.

From them he heard how Jesus mixed with

publicans and sinners, and was to be found at feasts and weddings. He listened to stories of His kindness and gentleness, and gradually a doubt crept into his mind. Was this indeed the deliverer of Israel? He had foretold One who should come with the fire of judgment, and, behold, Jesus was gentle as the dew. He, the Forerunner, lay in chains, at the mercy of a tyrant. Was not this the moment for judgment? But Jesus was walking in the flowering fields and feasting with the rich.

That this was a great prophet of God he did not doubt, for he had heard of His beautiful teaching and the raising of the dead—but was He the Messiah?

The doubt grew and grew and tortured him till he could endure it no longer, and he bade two of his disciples hasten to this leader of the people and put the question, “Art thou He that should come? or look we for another?”

Jesus was not angry. A picture must have risen in His mind of that morning when He had stood by the Baptist in the Jordan, and the eyes of both had beheld the radiance of the Holy Spirit in His descent, and perhaps He was sad that John

could doubt after that. But He understood, too, the longing and suffering of that brave heart. The messengers had found Him, surrounded by the sick and the maimed, and He let them stand by unanswered while He went on with His work of healing. At last He had done, and turning to them gave an answer to set all questions at rest. "Go your way," He said, "and tell John what things ye have seen and heard ; how that the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, to the poor the gospel is preached. And blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in Me." He did not wound John by exclaiming, "How could you doubt ?" It was as though He said, "If you could only be by My side you would have no doubt."

But while Jesus continued to grow in favour and power the shadows were thickening about the Baptist in his prison by the Dead Sea. Herod did not intend to put him to death, for he feared the Jews ; but neither could he make up his mind to release one who might again openly condemn him for his darling sin. He feared the fiery words of just rebuke. But there was one at his side who was waiting like a tigress to destroy this bold man

of the people—Herodias, who had left her husband to be Herod's queen. Her opportunity came at last.

It was Herod's birthday, and he made a great feast for his court, and they ate and drank and made merry. Then Herodias called her beautiful daughter Salome, and bade her dance before them all. A princess dancing in this public fashion had never been seen before, and Herod, who was dazed with the wine he had been drinking, was beside himself with delight. When Salome paused, breathless, he swore a great oath that he would give her whatever she asked, even to the half of his kingdom. After a moment's consultation with her mother, she came before him to demand a terrible gift—the head of John the Baptist. Immediately Herod was sobered. Rather anything than this! His conscience was stained with many sins, but he feared to take the life of this holy man, whom the common people still revered. Yet he was ashamed to break his oath.

Straight from the feast he sent a soldier to behead his prisoner; and the hardest of the guests must have been filled with horror when the dish with the bleeding head was given into the hands of

a maiden. But the guilty queen breathed freely once more.

The disciples came and bore away the body of their master and laid it in a tomb, and then carried the sad news to Jesus. John the Baptist was murdered to soothe the fears of a worthless woman, and laid to rest in an unknown spot. This seems a strange end for the Herald of God and the greatest of the prophets. But beyond the grave, in that strange City of peace and beauty, wherein is the Throne of Light, and through the midst of which flow the limpid waters of the River of Life, he has found his reward. There, through the centuries, he has beheld the splendour of the risen Christ, and has heard the ceaseless tread of an incoming throng, clad in robes washed white in the blood of the Lamb.

CHAPTER XXIV

HOW JESUS FED A MULTITUDE AND WAS FORSAKEN

ONE soft spring day a larger crowd than ever before gathered on a grassy plain to the north of the lake to listen to Jesus. From early morning they had been flocking out of the towns and villages round about, and now five thousand men, besides women and children, were waiting for His voice.

When the apostles returned at the end of the month's preaching throughout Palestine, on which Jesus had sent them, they found Him busy teaching and healing the sick in Capernaum. They were full of joy, for their work had been successful; but their faces were pale, and they were worn with toil. It was partly because of this that their Master thought it good to go aside into the stillness of the country for a time. But

there was a second reason. Herod's guilty conscience allowed him no peace, and when he heard of the miracles worked at the lakeside, he had cried in a frenzy of terror that this must be John the Baptist risen from the dead. Now he was seeking Jesus, and no doubt he thought to cast Him into prison also. So Jesus, fearing lest His work should be interrupted, and seeing the weariness of His comrades, led them quietly to the boat in the early morning, and they rowed away towards the northern end of the lake. But they were not unseen, and very soon the rumour spread that the Great Healer had left the town.

The crowds came hurrying through the streets and along the shores, struggling to keep pace with the boat as it moved through the blue water. They succeeded so well that when at length the little party landed, they were immediately surrounded. It was the time of the Passover, and many pious Jews going up to the feast would join the multitude.

Then Jesus saw that instead of rest there was given to Him a great opportunity, and He resolved to devote the day to teaching and to healing the sick. All through the sunny hours

the people hung on His lips and scarcely thought of the weary journey back to their homes. But when the sun began to set, His disciples grew anxious, and urged Him to send the multitude away to get bread. Jesus, too, with His tenderness for all human needs, was thinking of the people's hunger, and said to Philip, "Whence are we to buy bread that these may eat?"

Philip was a very true friend of Jesus, but a little slow at understanding Him. He went through a calculation in his mind, and said, "Two hundred pennyworth of bread is not enough if every one take but a fragment." The penny he spoke of was the Roman coin called a denarius, and was worth about sevenpence half-penny.

Andrew was one of the most practical of the twelve. He was content to take one step at a time, even if it were impossible to see what the next step should be. He brought the news—"There is a lad here, with five barley-loaves, and two small fishes;" and his face fell as he added, "but what are they among so many?"

I wish we had known the name of this boy who was able to help Jesus. Had he come in the hope of selling his bread and fish? I scarcely think so, for

it was scanty and humble fare. I think that he came just because he loved to hear Jesus; for he had not lingered on the edge of the crowd, but had elbowed and pushed his way through the throng until he was just at Andrew's side. In a moment he had given the contents of his little wallet, and saw it put into Jesus' hands. How very small it looked, and yet it was to be enough. One or two brief orders were issued; the people separated into groups of fifty and a hundred, looking with their parti-coloured robes like great flower-plots on the light green grass. The disciples gathered themselves round their Master again.

For a moment all was still; then His clear voice was heard thanking the Father for these good gifts, and as He began to break the loaves and divide the fish, a great wonder was seen. The loaves and fish never grew less. Great heaps of both were soon before Jesus; and the disciples, hurrying from group to group, distributed the food among the people. Soon every one had had abundance, and the disciples gathered up what had not been given out, and there was enough to fill twelve baskets—more than the whole provision in the beginning.

It was a great miracle, and yet we see without surprise wonders as great that happen from day to day. A single grain of corn in one year becomes fifty grains; in two years two thousand five hundred grains; and in ten years a million millions. What was in the beginning not enough for a sparrow's meal, in ten years would feed a nation.

The people grew more and more excited. The wild thought sprang up in their minds that they would make Jesus king, for surely this was the leader they needed—a man of the people, yet a great prophet and a wonder-worker, who could feed an army on the march though no more than one loaf were in His hands. What better opportunity than the present, for were they not five thousand strong? Let them proclaim Him king on the spot.

Jesus understood the thought, and it fell with the weight of a fresh burden upon His already weary spirit. He laid His plans swiftly. He persuaded His disciples to return to the boat and cross the lake without Him, until He had sent away the crowd; and they obeyed Him, as always, but not very willingly, for they, too, shared the excitement. Then when the crowd saw the friends

of Jesus going away, and that there was but one boat, they grew quieter and began to disperse, and He, breaking from those who still persisted in their purpose, hastened, as evening fell, up the slope of the mountain. He needed to be alone. He must speak with His Father in solitude, for He knew that a turning-point in His work had come. He must, at whatever cost, undeceive these people, who thought to make Him an earthly king. The darkness wrapped Him about, and the night-wind sighed as it rushed by Him and gathered up its strength to break into storm. There, in the loneliness of the mountain, God was with His Beloved Son.

On the little Sea of Galilee the weary apostles toiled at the oars and made no headway. The storm had broken, and lashed the water into waves that beat in fury upon the bow of the boat. They had rowed three or four miles, and now further effort was almost unavailing. Then through the darkness they saw dimly a strange sight.

It was not a sail, for it was coming against the wind, and as they watched it sink in the trough and rise again to the crest of the waves, they thought it a spirit from the dead, and trembled

with fear. But a voice they knew well sounded above the roar of the wind, saying, "It is I ; be not afraid." It was Jesus, ever pitiful of others' needs, who had left His quiet place of communion with His Father to help His tired friends.

As Peter heard the voice he grew ashamed of his cowardice, and, wishing to show himself bolder than the others, he shouted :

"Lord, if it be Thou, let me come to Thee on the water."

Jesus saw that His servant needed a new lesson, and said "Come." In a moment Peter was over the side, but as the cold water touched his feet and a great wave drenched him, his faith failed. He felt the waters mounting round him and cried, "Lord, save me." Immediately Jesus stretched forth His hand to help His reckless yet doubting friend, saying :

"O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?"

Then He, too, entered the boat and the storm fell. Quickly they glided through the dark waters, and it seemed scarcely a moment ere they reached the shore and saw the dim shapes of houses. They were at their destination.

The apostles were awestruck, and falling at Jesus' feet, they worshipped Him. They had never before worshipped any one but the unseen God, but now they cried, "Of a truth Thou art the Son of God." Jesus did not rebuke them. They were as much in the presence of God as though they stood with the angels before the great throne.

There was little time for rest, for very early He was surrounded once more by a crowd.

A sad and hard moment had come in His life, for He must teach the people that He would be no earthly king, and no leader of rebellions against the Romans. He knew they would not understand. The sifting time had come. He must separate those who really cared for Him from those who only cared for the glories and bounties they expected Him to provide. When the people asked Him, "Rabbi, how camest Thou hither?" He answered them coldly, and charged them plainly with seeking Him only because they had eaten and been filled.

"Labour not for the meat which perisheth," He said, "but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life."

Then He went on to tell them that the Father

was willing to give them the true bread from heaven. But they thought of the miracle of yesterday, and still longed for earthly ease, and they cried, "Lord, evermore give us this bread." Perhaps they imagined that every day their meals would come without labour. Jesus answered, "I am the bread of life: he that cometh to Me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on Me shall never thirst." But this was not the bread they wanted; and the faces that crowded about Him grew dark, and when He spoke yet more plainly, telling them that He had come down from heaven, and was the Son of God, murmurs arose.

"Is not this Jesus," they said, "whose father and mother we know? How doth He now say, I am come down out of heaven?" But Jesus did not flinch. He went on to say :

"I am the bread of life. I am the living bread that came down out of heaven. If any man eat this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread which I will give is My flesh, for the life of the world."

He was speaking of His death, when His body should be broken to save men, but His hearers could think only of their own desires for them-

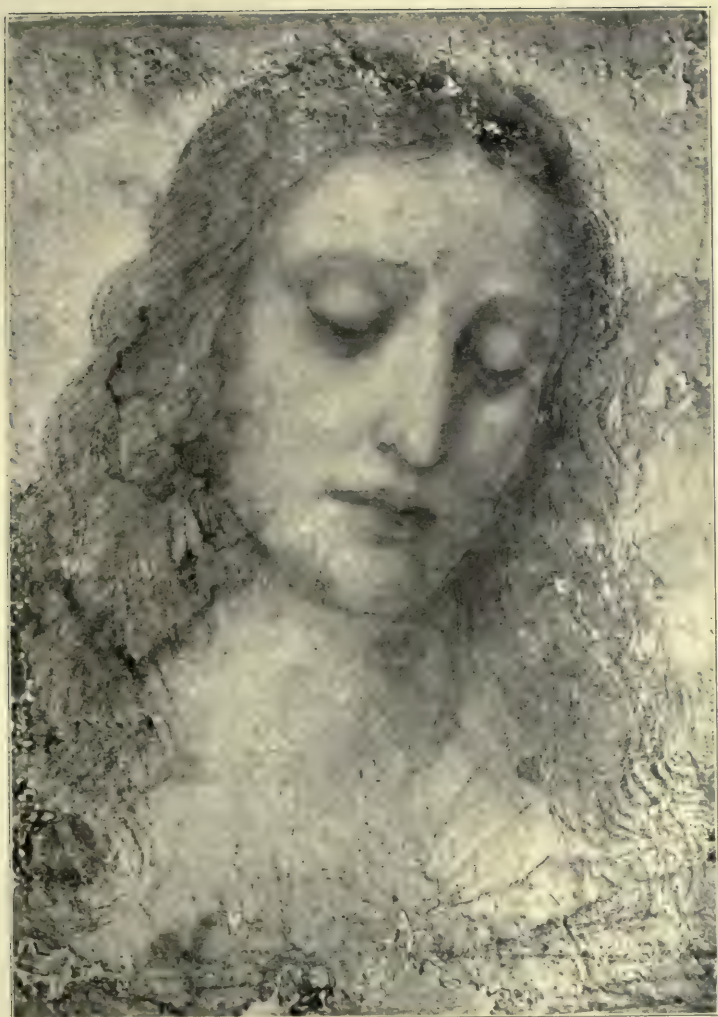
selves and for their country. Here, they thought, was a Jew with wonderful powers, who could be their leader and help them to be free and great once more ; and He refused. They knew quite well that He came from a poor little town called Nazareth, and all about His family, who were just working people like themselves, and yet He kept telling them that He was sent from heaven by God. And what was this strange thing He said about His flesh ? Surely He must be mad. In their anger and disappointment they forgot His deeds of mercy and His words of wisdom. Their hearts hardened. They would not understand. They shut the eyes and ears of their souls and went away and left Him.

How our Lord's heart must have ached when He saw them go ! In spite of their wilfulness and blindness He loved them. He had taught them and healed their sick. When He was weary He had still thought of their needs, and for their sakes He would lay down His life. But because He could not do as Satan had tempted Him to do in that dark hour in the wilderness, and be an earthly prince to lead them to glory and honour, they deserted Him. Perhaps at that very moment

Satan stood again at His side, but the great enemy was powerless.

In utter weariness of spirit Jesus turned to His disciples, wondering if they, too, only longed for earthly things, and asked, "Would ye also go away?" It was as much as saying, "Are you sure of your own hearts?" But Peter answered: "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life. And we have believed and know that Thou art the holy One of God." It was a noble answer. Not for what they should receive, not even because of the miracles they had seen, but because they felt that Jesus gave them new life, they still clung to Him. But the shadows of His future suffering were heavy on Him that day, and He only answered, "Did not I choose you the twelve, and one of you is a devil?" The dark face of Judas, half-reluctant to remain, had caught His eye. Even in this little remnant all were not true.

It seemed as if the work of Jesus had melted away like snow in the sun. Few remained but the disciples. Only those who felt the hunger and thirst of the soul could be really helped by Him. Just as when your mouth is dry and hot, you feel



Brugi.

THE FACE OF THE CHRIST.

From the Study by Leonardo da Vinci in the Brera Gallery, Milan.

water the best thing in the world, so the soul that thirsted for forgiveness and God would drink in the words of Jesus and be satisfied. Those who left Him were without this thirst. Their pride and self-love made them long for a different draught.

But better a few true hearts than five thousand selfish ones. Henceforth Jesus' chief work was the training of His disciples.

CHAPTER XXV

JESUS ON HEATHEN SOIL

AFTER these days of excitement and pain, Jesus longed to be quite alone with His faithful friends. He knew that great crowds would no longer follow Him in Galilee, for most of the sick had been healed, and the people were sorely disappointed with Him. But, as you will hear, the Pharisees had become His bitter enemies ; and so long as He stayed in Jewish lands He would have to meet them and answer their treacherous arguments. So He led His little band of followers right out of Galilee into the foreign lands to the north, the capitals of which were the famous seaports of Tyre and Sidon.

He did not intend to preach or to heal among the heathen as He had among the Jews. Not that the Jews were His favourites. He loved all men ;

and when He died He told His disciples to go into all lands with the good news they had to tell. But He felt that He Himself must confine His work to His nation, for they knew most about His Father and had been taught to expect the Messiah. Among them He could gain the truest followers, however few they might be.

Jesus was like a man who wished to sow a whole forest with corn. There was a little clearing in the midst of the forest, and He had to decide whether He would spend His time in sowing on this clear ground, or would go over many acres, scattering the grain wherever there was a bare place among the trees. It is quite plain that it would be wiser to secure a good harvest from the ground already cleared, and then train others to cut down the trees and sow far and wide the grain that had been ingathered. Some of the corn in the clearing would not grow ; but if the farmer began to sow everywhere through the forest, he might not get any harvest at all. Jesus' own nation was like the cleared ground ; the rest of the world was like the forest. Much of the seed scattered among the Jews was destroyed, but enough grew to ensure that one day the whole world would be sown with the Truth.

Jesus pitied the sick folk in the country round Tyre and Sidon quite as much as those in Galilee, and longed that all should know His Father, but He meant to train His disciples to go to the heathen. His own great work was to make His comrades understand Himself and God's love. But if He found people among the heathen with true and faithful hearts who really believed in Him, it was not waste of time to help them, because they would become loyal helpers in the kingdom of God.

Jesus had scarcely crossed the borders of Galilee before He was discovered by one woman who was in great trouble. She had a daughter who was possessed by an evil spirit, and had no peace of body or mind. By day and by night the poor girl was tormented. It was a wonder she was not dead. Some mothers would have lost their love for such an afflicted child, who made the home miserable by her wild raving. But this mother only loved her child the more. Living near to Galilee, she had heard of the wonderful Healer who had power over unclean spirits. She had heard, too, that He was descended from David, and was thought by some to be the Deliverer long

expected by the Jews. Somehow she learned that He was in her village, and she felt that there was at least a chance that He could do for her daughter what He had done for others. Finding Him out, she cried, "Have mercy on me, O Lord, Thou Son of David; my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil." Jesus answered not a word. It was strangely unlike Him to be so cold and silent to a pleading woman. But He wished to know her better, and His silence tested her faith. She continued her entreaties, her cries growing wilder and louder as He remained silent, until the disciples begged Him to send her away.

I think they wanted Him to do the desired miracle, if for no other reason than to get rid of her. But Jesus answered, "I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel." He was also trying His disciples to see if they were really pitiful, or just anxious to be freed from a troublesome person.

Something in the voice and look of Jesus gave the woman fresh courage, and made her sure that He was not an ordinary man. She came and worshipped Him, saying, "Lord, help me." You would have thought that Jesus would have yielded

at once when He heard that low, eager entreaty, and saw the tears in the woman's eyes. But He answered, "It is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it to dogs." He saw what a quick mind and noble heart the woman possessed, and He wished to draw out all that was in her. She thought for a moment, and said, "Truth, Lord: yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters' table." It was a clever answer. It was like saying to Jesus, "Yes, we foreigners are not the same as the Jews; we are outsiders; but is there not a crumb of help and kindness for me when the others have been served?" Jesus was greatly pleased at the woman's wit, and He saw that her eyes were full of trust. His face lit up, and He answered, "O woman, great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt." She hurried home, to find her daughter a different person. The wild glare had left her eyes. She was still and glad. At the very hour when Jesus spoke, she had been made whole.

After this miracle, Jesus spent some weeks among the mountains and woods to the north of Galilee. How refreshing it must have been for Him to be all alone with His disciples, with the

sound of the rushing streams in His ears, breathing the pure air of the higher hills! He made a wide circuit, and came down on the east side of the Lake of Galilee. Only a few of the people who lived there were Jews, and they were widely scattered. But they soon gathered round Him, and as He had never stayed in this part of the country before, there were many sick folk for Him to heal.

As the news of His wonderful power spread, a multitude streamed out to Him from the upland villages and widely distant towns. For three whole days the people lingered, sleeping at night in the open air. As the third day drew to its close all their food was exhausted, and many of them had a long distance to travel. Jesus called His disciples to His side and said, "I have compassion on the multitude. I would not send them away fasting, lest haply they faint by the way." But His friends answered, "Whence shall we have so many loaves in a desert place, as to fill so great a multitude?" for there were no villages near where bread could be bought.

It may seem strange to you that the disciples did not remember the great miracle by which

Jesus fed the five thousand people. But they had had to buy their bread every day for weeks past, and had grown accustomed again to the thought that all food must be bought. Jesus asked them how many loaves they had, and they answered, "Seven, and a few small fishes." Then He ordered the people to sit down, and giving thanks to the Father as before, He began to break the bread and fish, and bade His friends take it to the people. They all ate and were satisfied, although there were four thousand men, beside women and children.

The disciples did not need to be told this time to gather up the fragments. Of their own accord they took up the broken pieces which were not used, and filled seven large baskets with them. Thus Jesus taught these people, as He had taught the people of Galilee, that He remembered all their needs—not only their grievous sicknesses and their sinful hearts, but also the hunger which made them faint and weak. He was not afraid that this multitude would seek to make Him a king, for they were country folk come together from widely distant homes, and not full of plans to rid themselves of their foreign oppressors.

But now this peaceful, happy time came to an

end. Jesus took ship and sailed down the lake, and as soon as He had landed on Jewish soil, some of the Pharisees and Sadducees, who had been watching for Him like birds of prey, crowded round, tempting Him as Satan had done in the wilderness, asking Him to prove His power to them, but hoping, indeed feeling sure, that He would fail. Then they could turn to the people, who still remembered His deeds of mercy, and say, "Behold a pretender and a cheat." Jesus answered them by telling them to use their minds, and to reason from what they knew of Him already. The proofs of a pure life, of untiring love and of unflinching courage, were before them if they cared to read. It was as easy to decide about Him as to read the weather signs in the sky. The Jews had an old proverb about the weather, a little like the rhyme you know well :

A red sky at night is the shepherd's delight.

A red sky in the morning is the shepherd's warning.

Jesus quoted this proverb to them, and said, "When it is evening, ye say, Fair weather ; for the sky is red. And in the morning, Foul weather to-day ; for the sky is red and lowring. Ye know

how to discern the face of the heaven ; but ye cannot discern the signs of the times ! ”

The Pharisees understood what He meant, and that He said to them, “ Just as certainly as the crimson sunset betokens fine weather, so certainly do My works of love and pity and holiness proclaim the Messiah’s kingdom.” But they were like blind men, blind through hatred and jealousy. They had seen His miracles and His love, but these only urged them to lay a trap to overthrow Him. Their faces grew black as they turned away, foiled by His very openness. Jesus, who felt no loathing of leprosy or unclean diseases, must have shrunk in horror from men so unwilling to know the truth, so fierce to destroy great love.

But why was it that they hated Him whom others loved so much ? Why did these people, who thought they were the true worshippers of God, hate the Beloved Son of God ? I shall now try and answer that question.

CHAPTER XXVI

WHY THE PHARISEES HATED JESUS

THE most famous men among the Jews when Jesus lived were not generals or artists or rich merchants, but those who made the greatest show of piety. No Jews became soldiers or painters, and the rich were envied rather than honoured. A boy who wished for praise and admiration would watch the leading Pharisees with eager eyes. By degrees he would imitate them in their long prayers and fasts and strict ceremonies. He too, as he grew to manhood, would learn to gather together his robe when he met a sinner, and to walk with averted face as he passed by a heathen temple or a publican.

All the Pharisees were not insincere. They denied themselves a great deal to keep the rules they thought were necessary, and were not lazy

and dishonest in their dealings with their fellow-men ; it was with themselves and with God that they were not honest. By degrees they had learnt to value the approval of the people above everything. So they loved to pray in public and to make a parade of their piety. Even in prayer their thoughts were not all of the God of Israel, for then their own goodness would have seemed as nothing. Almost unconsciously they thought more of how they stood in the eyes of others, and even felt pangs of jealousy when they heard any one more admired for his goodness than themselves.

Then, too, they had so hedged about their life with little rules that sometimes it was impossible to keep them all, and they made many devices by which they seemed to keep the law, but really did what suited them best. This was particularly the case with their way of keeping the Sabbath.

God had given the seventh day to be a day of rest. It was a very wise and precious gift, for by means of the weekly resting-time, hard-working people were able to keep strong, and had one day on which they could pause and see the beauty of the sky and flowers, and give thanks for it all, and

think of God and His commandments. But the scribes and Pharisees had made the Sabbath a burden by all kinds of harsh rules. They said that on that day no one must walk further from home than seven furlongs, a little less than a mile. Not even an insect must be killed, for that would be working. Some of them even discussed whether it was right to eat an egg which was laid on the Sabbath.

But people grew very clever in keeping the law in the letter and not in the spirit. Thus, if a man wished to move a sheaf of corn, he laid a spoon upon it; for the rules allowed him to carry the spoon but not the corn, and so long as a spoon lay upon the sheaf he was not considered to be working. If it was important for him to go more than seven furlongs on the Sabbath, he would go on Friday and place a little food at that distance from his house, and more food seven furlongs farther on. For he said, "I am only allowed to walk a Sabbath day's journey from my home, but wherever my food is, there my home is." So he contrived to walk several miles without breaking the Sabbath law. Thus the day of rest became a prison-house instead of a palace of ease, and the Jews learnt to

be hypocrites in trying to evade the most tiresome regulations.

Now you can imagine how angry and jealous the scribes and Pharisees were when Jesus came and paid no heed to the tradition, but openly taught that it was of no account, and even a snare. Here was One in whose life they could not find a blemish, who won the people by His loving and wonderful deeds, who taught with such authority that crowds flocked to Him, calling Him "Rabbi," whose praises were in every one's mouth, and yet He was not one of themselves, and feared not to charge them with hypocrisy. They could not endure it.

Very soon they not only rejected Him, but planned for His downfall. Jesus once compared them to whited sepulchres. Before the Passover, all the graves in fields or by roadsides were white-washed, so that pilgrims to the feast might not become unclean, according to the Temple law, by stepping on them. They shone fair and clean in the sunshine, but every one knew that they covered decay and death. Jesus said the Pharisees were just like these graves, clean and fair outside, but within full of rottenness and decay; for

while they prayed and fasted, and passed by publicans and sinners with contempt, their hearts were eaten up with self-love.

They would have said, "Blessed are the scribes and Pharisees," but they heard Jesus, who stretched loving hands of welcome to the worst of sinners, saying, "Blessed are the meek," and they were full of pride; and "Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness," and in this was their condemnation; for had they so hungered and thirsted, they would have sat at His feet. His goodness was as obvious as the sunshine, but because it seemed to extinguish their own little light, they would have none of it.

One Sabbath day Jesus was walking through the ripening cornfields, and His disciples began to pluck the golden ears on either side of the path, and rubbing off the husks with their hands, they ate the grains, for they were hungry. To pluck ears of corn was not thought to be stealing by the Jews, and on another day no one would have noticed. But the Pharisees complained, for in the tradition there was a rule that to take even a single grain of standing corn was to do the work of harvest. Jesus wished to teach them that the

law of Sabbath rest was not like the commandment against stealing, which must always be kept in exactly the same way and to the same extent.

He reminded them that David, when fleeing from his enemies, took the shew-bread, which was meant only for the priests, and ate it, and gave it to his men. He knew that the Pharisees did not blame David for this action, for he was their hero and was in sore need. They were not able to answer Jesus. At the same time they would not accept His view of the Sabbath, as a gift of God to be cherished and guarded, but not to be spoiled by ceasing from necessary labour. But He made His meaning very plain by saying, "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath." These words teach us that we are to keep a day of rest, but that it must not be hampered by petty rules, and that it is right to do works of necessity and mercy, even if labour is required.

Another Sabbath He was teaching in a synagogue, and a man was there whose right hand was withered and shrunk so that he could not use it. The Pharisees watched Jesus, thinking that if He healed this man, they would accuse Him as a Sabbath-breaker. Jesus read their thoughts, and

sought to shame them out of their hardness and hypocrisy. He bade the man with the withered hand stand forth in the midst of the people. Then He put the question, "Is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good, or to do harm? to save life, or to destroy it?"

The silence was long unbroken. Not a Pharisee raised his voice. You would have thought that they would all have been anxious that this man might have been made fit for work again. In their hearts they were saying, "We cannot say it is lawful to do good, and heal this man, for then we encourage this upstart; but neither can we say that it is wrong to do good, and to save this man from beggary and uselessness." So they were silent. They would neither admit themselves in the wrong nor attack Jesus openly. They were both cowards and hypocrites.

Jesus searched their faces with eyes full of sad anger at their obstinacy and self-conceit. It was but too plain that their hearts were hardened against Him and against the truth. Turning to the man, who was waiting with curious, expectant face, He said simply, "Stretch forth thy hand." As soon as He was obeyed, the nerves regained

power, the blood coursed through the muscles, and the shrunken hand became as strong and firm as its fellow. The people gazed in amazement, but the Pharisees flung themselves out of the crowd, torn with rage, eager to plan the destruction of Jesus. They went so far as to take counsel with followers of Herod, from whom as a rule they kept themselves apart; for the Herodians, as the courtiers were called, cared much more about their king than about their nation and their religion. But these Herodians also feared Jesus, for they thought He would raise a rebellion. So the Pharisees sought their aid. All other prejudices and hatreds were mastered by their one overpowering desire to break the power of Jesus. They knew it not, but they were fast becoming tools of the powers of darkness.

For the time, however, they could do nothing. But they were always lying in wait for an opportunity to harm Jesus. All through the rest of this history you will see that they were ever at His heels, like a pack of yelping dogs, eager to destroy, but afraid to attack. In the end they became like hungry wolves, longing for His blood.

CHAPTER XXVII

HOW JESUS WAS TRANSFIGURED

IT is always very difficult for any one to tell those he loves best that they are about to lose him. If it be but a parting for a year, to speak of it is painful ; but when the mystery of death is to be the barrier, the task is almost unbearable. For our Lord there was the added pang that to the bewildered and sorrow-stricken disciples the loss of His presence would seem very like the failure of all their hopes. He saw very clearly that the Pharisees would not rest until they had destroyed Him, and He knew that the time had come to prepare His comrades for the blow that would surely fall. More than once He had hinted at it. He had told them that the day would come when the bridegroom should be taken away, and the joy of the marriage-party turned to grief, but they

had not understood. Now He must speak more plainly.

But before He spoke He wished to make quite sure that they could bear such bitter tidings. The year of His great popularity was over; the acclaiming multitudes had left Him; the Pharisees showed plainly that they hated Him. There was no longer outward success to dazzle the eyes and strengthen belief. Unless their faith had struck its roots deep in other soil than this, it must fail. Had their eyes and ears really been opened to the beauty of God in His life and teaching? Would they continue steadfast under the added strain?

He led them away from the lake northwards to the mountain land where the Jordan has its source. There, in the quiet country, He began to ask them who the people of Galilee thought He was. They answered, "John the Baptist; but others say, Elijah; and others, that one of the old prophets is risen again." Evidently most of the people could not, after all, think of Him as the Messiah, for He was so different from their dreams and hopes. They thought Him a forerunner of the Messiah, or one of the great men of Israel come to life again.

Then Jesus looked on His little band of followers, and put the great question which He puts to us all, "But who say ye that I am?" For a moment there was stillness. Every man could hear his neighbour breathe. They had clung to Jesus when the multitude forsook Him in Capernaum, seeing that He would not be a bread-king, but much had happened since then. In the face of the deserting multitudes and the opposing rabbis, could they still declare Him the Hope of Israel?

Peter broke the silence. His voice rang out clear and unfaltering, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God"; and the faces of the other disciples showed that their slower tongues would give the same answer—all but one. The worldly soul of Judas was surely nursing the slumbering thought that he must soon leave this discredited and poverty-stricken Master for one who would give him money and a proud place, which were to him the real treasures.

It was a glad moment for Jesus when He heard Peter's words. For an instant the thought of the dark months to come, which hung like heavy clouds on the horizon, melted away, and He spoke of the days when His Church should be established

in the earth, and rock-men like Peter should be its foundation. But soon His eyes grew grave again, and He began to speak of their coming troubles. He told them that He must go to Jerusalem, although He knew He would be persecuted there, and rejected by the leaders of the people, and finally put to death. But He told them with equal certainty that on the third day He should rise again from the dead. Always when Jesus spoke of His death He added this promise, and it was like the sun striking a crimson living fire through the chill mist of the coming separation.

The disciples were overwhelmed at these words ; but Peter, thinking that his Master was merely depressed, and not stopping to consider how carefully the sad news had been broken, burst out with something like an oath, and exclaimed, "God have mercy on Thee, Lord ; this shall never happen to Thee." He so far forgot himself as to begin rebuking Jesus for faint-heartedness. But the Master turned and hushed His reckless follower with some of the sternest words He ever uttered — "Get thee behind Me, Satan ; thou art a stumbling-block unto Me ; for thou mindest not the things of God, but the things of men." It was

too true. Peter knew that Jesus was the Messiah, but he still could not bring himself to believe that the Messiah must die before He could become a conquerer. The other disciples said nothing, but they shared Peter's thoughts. They could not grasp what Jesus meant, but thought that at the worst He was speaking a parable to them, and was only describing how His enterprise would seem almost to fail, and then rise in splendour as from the dead.

Jesus said little more at that time save to warn them that no follower of His must look for a life of ease. He reminded them of the most hateful sight in Judæa—a man carrying the cross to which he was going to be nailed—and said, "If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me." After this, Jesus spoke to His disciples several times of the death He must die, and told them that He Himself would be tortured and nailed to a cross. But the thought was too bitter for them to face, and they would not let themselves believe it.

A week after Jesus had spoken so clearly of the future, He drew apart three of His disciples, just as the sun neared his setting, and led them up the

slopes of a high mountain. He was accustomed at every time of special strain to spend a whole night in communion with His Father. Generally He went apart alone, but this time He took Peter and James and John with Him, for He wished to cheer and strengthen them—the heart of His little company.

In a little while they reached a resting-place and Jesus began to pray, and was still praying when His disciples were overcome with sleep ; for they were very tired, and the keen mountain air had made them drowsy. The early hours of the night wore away. At length they stirred in their sleep, and were awakened by a scene of exceeding glory. Before them was their Master, but His was no longer the dim figure with outstretched hands they had watched in the starlight. His raiment was now of the purest white, and bright as the rays of the sun, dazzling their sleep-laden eyes. His face, too, was changed, and was irradiated as by an inward light. He seemed no longer of this earth.

And He was not alone, for on either hand was a radiant figure. As the awe-stricken men listened, they learned that these were Moses and

Elijah. Scarcely breathing, and hardly understanding, the disciples heard these august visitants speak with their Master concerning His departure from the earth, which was to take place at Jerusalem. But as the spirits of the past were about to vanish, Peter, half-dreaming, and longing for the wonderful vision to continue, said to Jesus: "Master, it is good for us to be here. Let us make three dwelling-places; one for Thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elijah." He meant to build three little huts with branches of trees, that these blessed companions of the Lord might stay with Him.

Even while he spoke, a cloud over-shadowed them all—not a cloud of mist nor of darkness, but bright as the western clouds at sunset. Each onlooker was hidden from his neighbour; and as Peter's words died upon his lips, out of the heart of the cloud came a voice, terrible in its sweetness, saying, "This is My Beloved Son, My chosen; hear ye Him." When the disciples heard it they fell on their faces, and, trembling with fear, lay like the dead, they knew not how long. They dared not look up till they felt a warm, kind hand upon their shoulder, and heard

the dear familiar voice of Jesus saying, "Arise, be not afraid." As they lifted their eyes the cloud had vanished, the mysterious presences were gone, and in the starlight they discerned Jesus alone, robed as they always knew Him in His peasant's garment.

We do not know if Jesus was always thus changed, His body becoming bright with the splendour of His spirit, when He prayed the whole night through. But for once His disciples were allowed to see something of the glory which was hidden behind His quiet face and common cloak, and they were taught that not only the angels, but also the saints of centuries gone, who had in the dim past prepared the way of Jesus, were watching Him in His great work, and thought even as He did of the coming doom at Jerusalem.

If anything could make and keep the apostles brave this vision would, but Jesus warned them to hide the sacred memory in their hearts, saying, "Tell the vision to no man, until the Son of Man be risen from the dead." He knew that if they spoke of this strange experience, the other disciples would be jealous. Besides, we sometimes think the more of that concerning which we may



Altinari.

THE TRANSFIGURATION.

From the Picture by Raphael in the Vatican, Rome.

not speak. He had done His best to prepare the foremost of His followers for all the doubts and fears with which they would be assailed.

As Jesus and the three came down the mountain-side they saw a crowd surrounding the other disciples, who were hemmed in like a little flock of frightened sheep. Scribes were arguing with them, and evidently triumphant. Ever and again shrieks which chilled the blood rose from some one in the multitude. Well might Peter have longed to stay on the mountain-top, when the peace of the fair morning was to be so soon rudely broken.

As the people saw Jesus they ran towards Him, and He pressed to the side of His discomfited friends, asking, "What question ye with them?" No one answered, until a man struggled through the throng and said: "Master, I brought to Thee my son, who hath a dumb spirit; and wheresoever it taketh him, it dasheth him down; and he foameth, and grindeth his teeth, and pineth away: and I spake to Thy disciples that they should cast it out; and they were not able." The disciples looked down in shame, and the scribes were silenced before the majesty of Jesus.

He Himself was saddened by this story of suffering, and sorely displeased that the scribes should have rejoiced that His friends could not help one so greatly afflicted. How grievous it was that, when left to themselves but a few hours, they should have failed to believe in the power He had entrusted to them. It was a miserable, disheartening scene. He felt that it was almost more than He could bear, and answered, "O faithless people, how long shall I be with you? how long shall I bear with you? Bring him unto Me."

The people who were trying to hold down the maniac brought him to Jesus. As soon as they loosed him, he tore himself with his hands until the blood ran down his face, and fell on the ground, foaming at the mouth and struggling as if in a wild beast's claws. It was a horrible sight. Jesus was ready to deliver him, but wished to strengthen the poor father's faith and to quiet the people. He asked quite calmly, as a doctor would, "How long time is it since this hath come upon him?" The father answered, "From a child. And oft-times it hath cast him into the fire, and into the waters, to destroy him; but if Thou canst do anything, have compassion on us, and help us." He

had almost lost hope, and scarcely expected any one to be able to bring relief. Jesus answered, "If *thou* canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth." The father began to hope again; as a drowning man clutches the smallest spar, so he strove to believe in Jesus' power. With tears he cried out, "I believe; help Thou mine unbelief."

Many people were now running up to see what was causing such excitement, so Jesus waited no longer, but said to the unclean spirit, "I command thee, come out of him, and enter no more into him." No sooner had Jesus spoken, than shriek upon shriek broke from the lad's lips, and his body was twisted as if it would be broken in two. He leapt in the air, and fell in a heap on the ground as if dead. Some of the people sobbed out, "He is dead." But Jesus took him by the hand and lifted him up. The lad was very white and weak, like one who had been long ill, but he was healed. His eyes had lost their haunted look, and a smile was on his lips as his father led him away.

Thus Jesus turned His disciples' defeat into a great victory. The scribes shrank away without a

word. But the disciples were much disturbed at their failure, for they had been able to do miracles when sent forth some months before to be the heralds of Jesus. When alone with Him they said, with a question in their voice, "We could not cast it out." Jesus answered, "This kind cometh out by nothing save by prayer." These friends of Jesus had evidently been trusting in their own strength, and when baffled they had not turned to God in earnest prayer. If their Master spent whole nights in prayer, how much greater was their need of the Father's help?

There come moments when we shrink, like Peter, from a return to the common round of life. We, too, stand, as it were, on the slopes of a high mountain, and gazing through the dusk or glimmering dawn that wraps the sleeping earth, feel the near presence of the unseen, although our eyes are holden. But beneath us are the hard-pressed and the wretched, and the duties of the workaday world that thrust out urgent hands. We must go down to meet them. There, too, although the sweet still hour is past, God walks with us.

CHAPTER XXVIII

HOW JESUS TRAINED HIS DISCIPLES

YOU must not think that Jesus taught His disciples as a schoolmaster teaches his pupils or a professor his students. Though He was only a little more than thirty years old, and some of His disciples must have been older, He was like their father in spiritual things, and they were like babes. Once He spoke of them as His "little children"; and as He led them through the fields and cities of Palestine, He taught them as He went, by scenes of sorrow and suffering, or by the lovely things of the earth, and most of all by showing them Himself; for in this way they learned to know the Father also.

He did not take a book of the Old Testament and explain it, though He often quoted from the Jewish Bible in explaining other things. But

whatever was in their minds, and interested them as they walked together, He used so as to make God and spiritual things clearer. When they made mistakes, He showed them where they were wrong. When they asked questions, His answers often told them much more than they asked. After He had died and risen again, when they went forth to spread the good news over the world, they were still ignorant about many things; but they had learned how to love, and that their heavenly Father was like their Master in pity and holiness and indignation against evil. These were the great lessons Jesus had striven to teach, until His death, which taught the greatest lesson, and His resurrection, which sounded forth the glad tidings of eternal life.

Peter was one of Jesus' closest friends, and was quick to believe and obey. He was also quick to speak his thoughts, and often said what the other comrades of Jesus were afraid or slow to say. It was the words or doings of Peter which often drew forth his Master's deepest teaching; and we are thankful for his blunders, for they are like beacons, warning us of the same dangers, and like lamps, making plainer the pure spirit of our Lord.

Jesus went to stay for a few quiet days in Capernaum before saying farewell to it for ever, and lived as before in Peter's house. Very soon the collectors of the tribute-money for the Temple came to Peter and said, "Doth not your Master pay the two drachmæ?" This was the money, about one shilling and threepence, which every Jew was called upon to contribute towards the cost of the morning and evening sacrifices of the Temple. It seems to have been collected just as rigidly as if it were one of the taxes of the Roman Emperor.

Peter did not stop to consider, or to consult his Master, but said at once, "Yes, He does." He seems to have thought it would be a slur on Jesus to say "No," especially as most people paid the tax early in the year, and it was now autumn. But I think on the way home he felt uneasy. Perhaps he doubted whether Jesus possessed even this small sum, or wondered whether He approved of a tribute which people were compelled to pay whether they wished or not. His mind was so full of these questionings that, as soon as he entered the house and before he had said a word, Jesus was aware of his thoughts and

answered them, saying, "What thinkest thou, Simon? of whom do the kings of the earth take toll or tribute? of their own children, or of strangers?" Peter answered, "Of strangers." Then said Jesus, "The children are free."

He meant to teach Peter two things. First, that the Temple should be supported by the free-will gifts of its worshippers, just as a father might depend upon the gifts of his children. Secondly, I think there was a deeper thought in these words of Jesus. Peter knew Him to be the Messiah, the Beloved Son of God. Surely it was a strange thing for God's own Son to be taxed for the worship of His Father. Peter's face fell as he saw that he had not honoured his Master in giving this ready promise.

But Jesus went on to say, "Notwithstanding, lest we should cause them to err, go thou to the water, and cast an hook, and take up the fish that first cometh up; and when thou hast opened his mouth, thou shalt find a stater: take and give them for Me and thee." A stater was about the value of half-a-crown, and therefore exactly the amount of the tribute for two. Jesus was anxious that the collectors of tribute should not think that He and

Peter were indifferent to the Temple and its worship, or refused to pay because they loved money.

No doubt He could have borrowed the money, but He wished to teach His friends that God can provide all that is needed for His worship, without exacting gifts from unwilling hearts. He therefore sent Peter to seek the money required in the most unlikely of all places—a fish's mouth. A strange treasury indeed! But how clear the lesson! This miracle was a parable, teaching that out of the most unlikely places God can bring forth the means for His worship. Do not think it strange that Jesus would do a miracle just to teach one disciple a lesson. In the Master's eyes it was not a little thing that His disciples, and through them the Church, should learn to think rightly about the gathering up of gifts for the service of the Father.

On the way to Capernaum Jesus had noticed that the disciples were talking a great deal among themselves, discussing some question quite angrily. When they had reached the house He asked them, "What were ye reasoning on the way?" He knew of what they had been speaking, but wished them

to tell Him. They were all silent for very shame, for they had been discussing which amongst them was the greatest. Perhaps a little jealousy had crept in because Jesus had sometimes taken Peter and James and John apart. If this feeling grew, it would darken their hearts and set them one against the other, and hinder the progress of the Kingdom. Such an ugly mood could not be rebuked in a sentence.

So Jesus sat down and called the twelve about Him. Then He took a little child, perhaps one of Peter's children, and set him in the midst of them, as though to say, "This child shall be your teacher." I think the child must have been half-frightened, so Jesus took him in His arms. Then He said most solemnly, "Verily I say unto you, Except ye be changed, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." These words made clear to the disciples that when they were filled with envy and pride they were really like the Pharisees who stood outside the gates of the Kingdom, and yet thought they knew most about it. Those who will enter in must be simple and trustful, so that they can receive the love and holiness of the

Father. They must be like little children, willing to be taught, and quick to obey, not thinking whether one were greater than another.

Then Jesus gave them quite a new thought about greatness, and said, "Whosoever shall humble himself as a little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven." This must have amazed the disciples, who thought that those who commanded, not those who obeyed, were the greater. They thought that people were great when they seemed great. Jesus taught that the only true greatness is greatness of character. Those are greatest who receive most from God, and it is to the hearts of the humble that God gives Himself most freely.

The apostles were slow to learn this lesson of the glory of humility. Twice, at least, in the next few months the same desire to outshine their fellows appeared. Strange, for they loved Jesus, and could see that He cared nothing about rank and fame. In the end, they did learn that what matters is not so much what we seem to be, or what people say of us, but what we are. Above all, they learnt that a heart open to the Father's gifts means riches and greatness and peace.

Another day Peter came to Jesus and said, 'Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times?' The rabbis were accustomed to say that you only needed to forgive the same person three times. Forgive the first offence and the second and the third, but on the fourth, punish. When Peter said "Seven times," he was going much further, and imagined that no more could be asked. But he was quite wrong. The fact that he counted how often he forgave, showed that he lacked the true spirit of forgiveness. He was like the Pharisees in thinking that the time could ever come when it was right to refuse forgiveness to one sorry for his faults. "Not seven times," answered Jesus, "but seventy times seven," which, of course, meant so often that you must cease to count. Then He told this story:—

A king called together his governors and servants, and began to reckon with them. Some of them ruled over provinces and drew the taxes for him, others were his treasurers and watched over his money. It had been easy for a man to use the king's money for himself, because for a long time no account had been asked of what had been spent.

But now every dishonest servant trembled. One wretched officer was brought before the king because he owed more than two million pounds. It was an enormous debt, which could not possibly be paid. The king sternly commanded to sell this man and his wife and his children for slaves, and to strip him of all his possessions, that the debt might be paid at least in part. At this dreadful sentence, the officer fell at the king's feet and kissed the ground before him, crying, "Lord, have patience with me, and I will pay thee all." The king was moved to pity as he saw the poor wretch trembling before him. He forgave the debt, enormous though it was, and commanded that the man should be set at liberty.

This officer went straight away to one of his fellow-servants who owed him only between two and three pounds, and catching him by the neck, half-choked him, and said, "Pay me what thou owest." His fellow-servant fell at his feet, as if entreating the king himself, and said, "Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all." But he refused, and cast the debtor into prison till the debt should be paid.

His fellow-servants heard of his hardness and

were disgusted, and came and told the king that the man he had pardoned had acted thus harshly towards his neighbour. The king was full of anger, and, calling the hard-hearted servant, said : "O thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all that debt, because thou desiredst me: shouldest not thou also have had compassion on thy fellow-servant, even as I had pity on thee?" Then the king sent him to be imprisoned and punished till he paid every farthing he owed.

Peter did not need an explanation of this parable. Its meaning was quite plain. We need God's forgiveness much more than any one needs ours ; if He forgives us when we repent, we should surely forgive others when they repent. Peter understood, but was he ready to obey ? Perhaps he looked reluctant, for Jesus wrote the meaning on his memory for ever by saying, "As the earthly king did, so likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother."

After this fashion the disciples learnt the mind and way of Jesus. He was the most patient of teachers, and it was the most pleasant of schools. But, as you have seen, the lessons were often diffi-

cult to learn, and the rebukes sometimes sharp and stern. The disciples would soon have grown weary had they not loved their Master. There is still a school in which the Lord is the great Teacher, but only those that love Him care to be His scholars, and they learn more by their love than by the words of preachers or the teachings of the Holy Book.

CHAPTER XXIX

HOW JESUS TAUGHT HIS FRIENDS TO PRAY

A LITTLE child at first learns everything by watching the people about him, and by imitating them. If his mother is gentle and kind, he learns to be gentle and kind too, by the tones of her voice and the love in her eyes. He says his first words in trying to copy what he hears, and takes his first steps because he sees others walking. The disciples were like babes in spiritual things, and they learnt a great deal just from what they saw Jesus do.

They had often seen Him pray, for He did not always go aside by Himself when speaking to His Father. They themselves felt that they did not know what to say to God, for Jesus had given them so many new thoughts and desires, that the old prayers they had said in the synagogues did not satisfy them. One day Jesus had been stand-

ing apart, stretching out His hands in prayer—for the Jews did not kneel and clasp their hands as we do; and when He ceased they said to Him, “Lord, teach us to pray, as John taught his disciples.” The Baptist had evidently taught his followers certain prayers, and the friends of Jesus had wondered that their Master had not done the same.

He was quite ready to help His disciples in this way, but He had waited till they felt they needed His help, just as God waits to give us some of His blessings until we feel our need of them and ask for them. He now taught them this prayer, the words of which we so often use, saying: “When ye pray, say, Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, as in heaven, so in earth. Give us day by day our daily bread. And forgive us our sins: for we also forgive every one that is indebted to us. And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil.”

Jesus did not mean that we are never to use any other prayer, or are always to say just the same words, but that we should pray with thoughts and petitions like these. It is a wonderful prayer, for it is very short, and yet asks for so much that a

whole book might be written about it. Though it seems simple, the disciples would not understand it all at once, but some things in it would catch their attention immediately.

They would notice first that they were to use the beautiful word "Father," and then that they were not to pray only or chiefly for themselves. All through the prayer they were to think of others, saying, "*Our* Father," "Give *us* our daily bread," "Lead *us* not into temptation." Their chief thoughts were to be the glory of God's name, the coming of His kingdom, and the doing of His will. The first petition for themselves was the fifth in the prayer, "Give us day by day our daily bread." They were to pray for their simple needs, but not for their own glory, or for the things of the world. Then Jesus reminded them that they must not expect the forgiveness of God if their own hearts were hard against one who had injured them.

Last of all, they were to implore that they should not be led into temptation, which so easily might prove too strong for them. We are accustomed to add to this prayer, "For Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory."

Jesus only added these words sometimes, for He taught it to His friends more than once.

The disciples had asked about the form of their prayers, but Jesus went on to teach them that their prayers must be very earnest, and that they must not be easily discouraged. He told them this story to make His meaning plain :

One night a man who was very tired took his quilt from the shelf, where it lay rolled up during the day, and spread it on the floor, and had just fallen into a deep sleep, when he was disturbed by a loud knocking at the door. He heard a neighbour's voice saying, "Lend me three loaves; for a friend has come for the night, and I have no bread to set before him." He only answered in a sleepy voice, "Trouble me not: the house is locked up, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot rise and give thee." But the neighbour continued to knock and ask for the bread, until at last, seeing that there would be no chance of sleep while this noise continued, the man rose from his bed, groped his way to the jar where the loaves were kept, took them to the door, and thrust them into his neighbour's hands.

Then said Jesus, "Ask, and it shall be given

you ; seek, and ye shall find ; knock, and it shall be opened unto you." He reminded them that no earthly father would give his son who asked for food a stone instead of bread, a serpent instead of fish, or a scorpion instead of an egg. If even the evil people of this world know how to give good gifts to their children, how much readier is the Father to give His best gift, the Holy Spirit, to them that ask Him.

But it sometimes seemed to the disciples as if the most earnest and long-continued prayers were useless. In their secret hearts they were inclined to think that God did not care, or was hard and unjust. So one day Jesus told them another story to show that even if this were true, and God were unjust and forgetful instead of the tenderest Father, our prayers would be heard, if we only persisted. This was the story :

A poor widow, who was helpless and alone, was robbed and ill-treated by an enemy. She went to the judge, crying for justice, and saying, "Avenge me of mine enemy." But the judge was a harsh and selfish man, who feared no one in heaven or earth, and he took no notice of the widow's plea. Still, every morning she

came before him, crying for help and vengeance. However great the crowd, and with whatever insults she was treated, nothing drove her away. At last the judge said to himself: "Though I fear not God, nor regard man; yet because this widow troubleth me, I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me." Then said Jesus: "You hear what the unjust judge saith. And shall not God avenge His own people, which cry day and night unto Him? I tell you He will avenge them speedily." Thus He freed His disciples from their last and worst doubt. No one who heard Him speak these words and saw His flashing eyes and assured face could think that an earnest prayer would ever be in vain.

Jesus did not teach, however, that God would grant whatever the disciples asked. At another time He said, "Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father *in My name*, He will grant you." This saying is like a deep well, it is so full of meaning; but one thing it teaches plainly. We must only ask those things which we should feel worthy if our pure and holy Saviour were kneeling by our side. We cannot in His name ask anything which would be displeasing to Him; and as we learn how often the

friends of Jesus wished Him to do what seemed right to them, but was really harmful, we can understand better why some of our prayers are not answered in the way we desire. The Father always answers them in one way or another.

But some prayers cannot rise to God, because they are so heavy with self and pride that they never leave the earth. Humility and faith are the wings which carry our prayers to the throne of God. Here is a parable which Jesus spoke to some people who thought themselves very pious, and who said many prayers which never reached the Father's ear :

Two men went up into the Temple courts to pray, the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican. As they entered, the Pharisee, who was wearing his phylacteries, drew aside his garments lest he should even touch the publican, and standing where the passers-by could see him, he said : "God, I thank Thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week, I give a tenth of all that I possess." It seemed as though he were speaking to God, but really he was just talking to himself and praising himself. He

remembered the good things he had done, but he quite forgot his pride and unkindness, and that he needed forgiveness. That prayer was without wings, heavy as a stone.

The publican stole into a quiet corner, and as he thought of the pure and righteous God, and the sinfulness of his own life, he beat upon his breast as the mourners at a funeral do. He would not even raise his eyes to heaven, as was the custom of the Jews in prayer. He hung his head and sighed, "God be merciful to me a sinner." As he uttered these words in deep penitence, the prayer sped like a bird to its nest, and rested in the heart of God. "I tell you," said Jesus, "the publican went down to his house more righteous in God's sight than the other: for every one that lifteth himself on high shall be brought low; and he that humbleth himself shall be lifted on high."

As Jesus drew near the end of life, He said more than once, in urgent voice to His disciples, "Watch and pray." He meant that they were to set prayer like a sentinel at the gates of the heart, lest any evil thing should enter by stealth. This warning is still breathed by His Spirit in the ears of His followers, lest the warder of their souls

should sleep. But let us remember most of all that lovely saying, "Knock, and it shall be opened unto you." Our prayers should beat upon the door of God's mercy till it open to us. Then shall our souls enter into the garden of His love, where grow the pure white lilies of peace and holiness, and the Son of Man walks for ever.

CHAPTER XXX

FAREWELL TO GALILEE

THE day came when Jesus had to say farewell to Galilee. He looked for the last time on the lake sparkling in the sunshine, on the white sails of the fishing-boats swelling in the wind, on the long line of little waves breaking unceasingly upon the shore of town and village. There were the crowded little streets, along which He had passed so often with His disciples, healing the sick, giving strength to the feeble, and telling them all about the dear Father in heaven, who loved them and longed for their love. There, among the shady trees, were the paths where He had gone apart for quiet thought. They would know the tread of His holy feet no more. Nazareth, the home of His first peaceful years, had first loved and then rejected Him. Capernaum,

the chosen city of His ministry, had first admired and then grown indifferent. The time had come to turn His face towards Judæa, where He knew death awaited Him. But before He left Galilee, His family troubled Him once more.

They did not rightly believe, but they knew that His disciples looked to Him as the Messiah, and they wished to end the uncertainty that hung over His career. Perhaps people used to jeer at them when Jesus was living those quiet days in Capernaum. They may have boasted a little when great crowds were following their brother, calling Him "Rabbi," and now that outward success had faded, they were no doubt assailed with contemptuous questions:—"Well, and what is this brother of yours doing now? If He works miracles, why does He not help His nation against their enemies?"

So the brothers came to Jesus and said: "Depart hence, and go into Judæa, that Thy disciples also may behold Thy works which Thou doest. If Thou indeed doest wonderful things, let the whole world know." But Jesus waited to know from the Father the right moment to leave Galilee, and answered, "My time is not yet

come. Go ye up unto the feast: I go not up yet unto the feast."

The feast of which Jesus spoke was the Feast of Tabernacles, which was held at the end of harvest. The Jews gathered then to Jerusalem, and lived for seven days in the open air in little arbours made out of branches of trees. They did this to remind themselves of those long-past days when the nation lived in the desert on the way to Canaan. It was a time of joy and thanksgiving. He let the merry bands of pilgrims depart, and then quietly gathering His comrades together, took the road through Samaria to Jerusalem.

I think He must have turned on the last ridge before He lost sight of the great plain of Esdrælon. On its farther side lay the dear hills that encircled Nazareth, on which He had so often stood in early days, His heart beating with a wide and tender hope for Israel; and there beneath Him stretched the bare and yellow fields where the corn had been harvested, and on the lower slopes rose the terraces of vineyards from which the purple clusters had been borne to the wine-press; above these the grey-green olives clung to the hill-sides, their leaves turning to silver as the autumn

wind swept their branches, and the cypresses stood darkly erect, keeping sombre guard, the sentinels of nature. It was like a garden where God had written His beauty plainly, and yet His last and loveliest gift to the people who dwelt there was rejected. The Christ had come unto His own, and His own received Him not.

The little party now entered the province of Samaria, and two of the disciples hurried forward to seek lodging for the night in one of the villages. But you remember that the Samaritans hated the Jews; and the villagers, guessing that these men were going up to the feast at Jerusalem, refused to receive them although they offered money. When this news was brought, James and John, weary with the journey and angry at the insult, cried to Jesus, "Lord, wilt Thou that we command fire to come down from heaven, and consume them, even as Elijah did?"

They were forgetting that what was right when men's hearts were dark, and God was little known, was not right when the Beloved Son had come to teach them love. Jesus rebuked them and said, "Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of. For the Son of Man is not come to

destroy men's lives, but to save them." He led them on to another village, where they found a resting-place. He felt no anger against the Samaritans, only pity for men who were ruled by ugly thoughts and unkind feelings.

Jesus came very quietly into Jerusalem; and about the middle of the feast, which lasted eight days, He went up to the Temple courts and taught. As soon as He appeared, His name was in every mouth. He had been expected on the first day, and many had been discussing Him already. Wherever a group of Jews had gathered, the conversation was about Jesus. Some said, "He is a good man." Others, who thought He had led the people to expect that He would become their king, said, "No; He deceiveth the people." But they had all spoken privately, for they knew that the priests and Pharisees were His bitter enemies and would be the enemies of His friends.

When He at last appeared and began to teach in the Temple courts, many were filled with fresh amazement at His perfect knowledge of the Scriptures, for He had never been a pupil of the rabbis. Others wondered at His boldness, for He

said openly, "Why do ye seek to kill Me?" Some were questioning if the chief priests and Pharisees had begun to believe on Him, seeing that they left Him undisturbed. So all Jerusalem was filled with excitement concerning Jesus, and many people knew not what to think. But His enemies determined to capture Him on the last day of the feast, lest He should depart with the other pilgrims and elude them once more.

The last day of the feast was the great day when special sacrifices were offered, and it was then that Jesus made Himself known to the people as the great Giver of Joy. It was after this fashion.

Every morning during the week a priest, accompanied by a procession and with the sound of music, went with a golden pitcher through the Water Gate to bring water from the pool of Siloam. On their return the silver trumpets rang out a joyful note, and the eyes of all the worshippers were turned towards the great brazen altar. On either side of the altar stood a silver basin, and into one was poured the water and into the other, wine. Then the multitude, all carrying in their right hands willow branches and in their left hands citron branches, shook their willows towards the altar, and

the choir sang joyfully, "O give thanks unto the Lord." The people rejoiced greatly in this ceremony, for the water was a symbol of the showers which made the land fruitful and of the plenteous rain of the Spirit of God, which would be given in the days of the nation's new glory.

Just about the time of the outpouring of the water, when the dense crowd was strung to a high pitch of expectation, a voice pealed forth, saying: "If any man thirst, let Him come unto Me, and drink. He that believeth on Me, from him shall flow rivers of living water." A thrill passed through the multitude, and all eyes turned from the altar towards this daring interrupter of the Temple ceremonies, and yet no man lifted a hand against Him, for the words seemed to fall from heaven upon their astonished ears, and to many it seemed that the joyful day so long foretold had dawned at last.

The speaker—and soon the people knew it was Jesus—was telling them that He had a better gift to bestow than water from the pool of Siloam,—a gift that would quench the deepest thirst and in time become a fountain of refreshment to all around. He was saying to them what He had said

two years before to the woman of Samaria, only in a yet clearer fashion. The water poured into the silver vessel year after year was a sign of the outpouring of God's Spirit when the blessed days should come. Behold, One stood in the people's midst who told them that the long years of prophecy were over, the heavenly fountain-head was opened at last, all could drink and be satisfied.

But when the moment of surprise was past, the people began, as usual, to argue among themselves. Some said, "This is the Prophet who will come before the Christ." Others said, "This is the Christ Himself." But their neighbours answered, "How can the Christ come out of Galilee? Doth not the Scripture say that He cometh of the seed of David, and out of the town of Bethlehem?" So there was a great division among the people, and in every street and market-place His claims were discussed. Just for this reason none dared to lay hands on Him. Even the Temple guard turned away without a word and let Him pass forth free, and when the chief priests demanded why they had not brought Jesus, they only answered, "Never man spake like this man." His strange

words, in all their simplicity and authority, still haunted their hearts.

Thus Jesus began a fresh appeal to the people of the sacred city, although He knew the Pharisees were thirsting for His blood. For the moment the interest and excitement of the multitude flowed with the fierce current of a mountain stream. If He could but turn its force into the deep channel of love and obedience, it might yet mingle its waters with the tideless ocean of eternity, which mirrors for ever on its bosom the likeness of God. But this was not to be. He told them plainly concerning Himself that He was without sin, that before Abraham lived He was, and that He was One with the Father. To this the people listened doubtfully, and when He spoke of the evil in their own hearts, they took up stones to destroy Him. The more they listened to Jesus, the more their hearts hardened, the fiercer they grew. He toiled on, but He knew that as He had said a last farewell to Galilee, He must soon say a last farewell to Jerusalem, and on that day He would say farewell to life.

CHAPTER XXXI

HOW JESUS HEALED THE BLIND MAN

ALTHOUGH the people of Jerusalem, like the Galileans, turned away from Jesus, and His heart was sore, He did not grow bitter. He remained as pitiful as ever, and as ready to heal the sorrows or sicknesses of those who cried to Him for help.

One Sabbath day as He passed a man who had been born blind, His disciples, who were seldom away from His side, asked, "Did this man sin before he was born, or did his parents sin, that he was born blind?" The Jews thought that every one in trouble was being punished for some wrong-doing, and some thought that a child who was blind or lame from the beginning had lived wickedly in some other life, and therefore was made to suffer in this life. But Jesus answered, "Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents : but

that the works of God should be made plain in him." He wanted them to understand that suffering is not always punishment, and often comes for some other purpose, known only to God.

The blind man had heard them speaking, but said never a word. He had often heard people argue in this fashion, but had learned not to care. Yet these people did not pass on as others did, after throwing him a farthing. They had stopped. What was that man with the kind voice doing? He heard Him spit on the ground; then he felt clay laid upon his poor sightless eyes, and heard the words, "Go, wash in the pool of Siloam."

Jesus had taken pity upon this silent sufferer, of whom people thought and said such hard things, and had determined to heal him. There is no healing power in clay, although some of the ancients used to think some kinds were good for diseased eyes. Jesus used it to strengthen the man's faith, and when the beggar heard the command, and felt the touch of firm yet gentle fingers upon his face, he started to his feet. Weary of the long years spent in the darkness, he hurriedly groped his way down the street and

through the city gate towards the great pool of water which made Siloam so well known.

Soon his familiar figure was seen returning. His eyes were open, and he was gazing eagerly about him, confused, but rejoicing in his first sight of the dear earth, and walking without the stick he had used to guide his steps. People turned their heads to look after him in amazement, and said among themselves, "Is not this he that sat and begged?" Others shook their heads, for sight had given him quite a new expression. A few said hesitatingly, "It is like him." The beggar put an end to all uncertainty by saying, "I am he."

They began to question him at once, "How were thine eyes opened?" He told his simple but wonderful story, how a man named Jesus had delivered him from blindness. They were filled with curiosity, and were impatient to see Jesus, asking, "Where is He?" The man answered quite shortly that he did not know; for he wanted to be left alone to think of all that this marvellous change meant for him. Besides, he scented trouble in the air.

But the neighbours were not to be put off so

easily, and hurried the man away to some of the leaders of the Pharisees, to whom he told the story once more. These Pharisees had such blind souls that they could not see the goodness and mercy of God in such a deed. Their thoughts flew instantly to the rules of the Sabbath, and when they learned that clay had been made on the day of rest, they said, "This Healer is not of God, because He keepeth not the Sabbath day." But all of them were not so narrow and unloving. Some said, "How can a man that is a sinner do such miracles?" There was a division among them, some against Jesus and some for Him. They turned once more to the man and said, "What sayest thou of Him because He hath opened thine eyes?" Without a moment's hesitation he answered, "He is a prophet."

But now some of the Pharisees interposed with a new idea, saying that it was a fraud, and the man had never been really blind. So his father and mother were sent for. They arrived breathless with haste and in great fear, for they knew that the Chief Council of the Jews, called the Sanhedrin, had decided that any one who became a follower of Jesus was to be shut out from the

synagogues and treated as an outcast. They were asked, "Is this your son, who ye say was born blind? how then doth he now see?" Their answer was very cautious: "We know that this is our son, and that he was born blind; but we know nothing at all as to how he received his sight. He is of age, ask him; he shall speak for himself."

The Pharisees were baffled. There was no doubt that this man had been really born blind. They could not deny the miracle, but they were determined that Jesus should gain no credit by it. The man was called once more, and they said to him, "Give God the glory, for it must have been His doing. *We know* that this man Jesus is a sinner."

The beggar began to be impatient. He was bolder than his parents, and really grateful to his deliverer. He answered, "Whether He be a sinner or no, I know not: one thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see." This was very unsatisfactory. How the Pharisees wished these meddlesome neighbours had never brought the man to them. Almost in despair, and longing to find something against Jesus, they pressed the

man once more to tell them how he had received his sight; but he saw their growing confusion and their grudging spirit, and began to jeer at them, saying, "I have told you already, and ye did not hear: wherefore would ye hear it again? will ye also be His disciples?" The Pharisees glared at this ragged beggar, who dared to insult them when they were examining him. They began to abuse him, saying, "Thou art His disciple; but we are Moses' disciples. We know that God spake unto Moses: but as for this fellow, we know not whence He is."

Many Jews would have trembled before the rage of these religious leaders, but this man was undaunted, and he had not spent all these years in the dark without becoming sharp of wit. He took up the insult flung at Jesus, and threw it back as an argument against them. In a voice of mock surprise he cried: "Why, herein is a marvellous thing: ye know not whence He is, and yet He hath opened my eyes. It is easy enough to find out. God does not hear sinners. This must be a good man if He was able to open the eyes of the blind—a thing that has not happened since the world began." This was too much. Furious

because of their failure and the taunts of one they despised, they hustled him out of their presence and forbade him to enter a synagogue. Henceforth he was expected to keep at least a yard apart from every Jew—to act, indeed, almost as if plague-stricken.

It was very hard. Just when he could look into the eyes of his fellow-men and rejoice in the light of their faces and in the beautiful world, he was made an outcast. It was as if he had exchanged blindness for leprosy. Yet he had only spoken the truth. If it were all to happen over again, he would do the same. He was very ignorant, but he was completely true.

The news soon spread through Jerusalem that the blind beggar had gained his sight but had lost the right to enter a synagogue. When Jesus had heard that the man whom He had blessed had thus been made an outcast, He did not rest till He had found him. Then he asked, "Dost thou believe on the Son of God?" The answer was very humble and sincere, "Who is He, Lord, that I might believe on Him?" Jesus said, "Thou hast both seen Him, and He it is that talketh with thee." At these words the eyes of the man's soul

were opened, and, falling at Jesus' feet, he worshipped Him, saying only, "Lord, I believe"; for he was ever a man of few words.

So Jesus won a true disciple when the multitudes held back from Him. Jesus, the Light of the World, had not shone on that dark heart in vain. More precious than the light of day was the radiance that flooded his spirit. Outcast he was from his nation's Church, but what cared he? He was in the light, in the great light. Had he doubted Jesus, had he been a coward, he might still have groped his way to the Synagogue and been welcomed by his father and mother, but he would have been sitting in double blindness, in the great dark.

For a little while after this miracle, Jesus was safe in Jerusalem. The Pharisees had been too hopelessly discomfited in their discussion with the blind man to dare to attack his deliverer. Jesus went openly to the Temple, telling all that He was the Good Shepherd, who knew the names of His flock, and was ready to lay down His life for the sheep. They crowded round Him as of old, but as He spoke still more plainly concerning Himself, they saw that He claimed to be not only

the Messiah, but also to be one with God, and they took up stones to attack Him once more. Even after His last miracle some had said, "He hath a devil and is mad." Now the feeling against Him grew stronger and stronger, and it was possible for the Pharisees to strike at Him once more. Jesus saw His life was in danger. He was ready to die, but He was not yet ready to leave His disciples, and there was a little more work to be done. So in December, in the wintry weather, He led His little band away to Peræa, the land beyond Jordan, which He had scarcely visited. It was as a fugitive He left the city.

CHAPTER XXXII

JESUS AND LITTLE CHILDREN

WHEN Jesus and the Twelve hurried down the rocky road from Jerusalem to the Jordan, and, crossing the river, entered the wide pastures and fertile fields of Peræa, it was not to hide themselves or to rest.

He knew that He would not long be left undisturbed, and was eager to make known the good news of His kingdom to all the people living there; for the land beyond Jordan for twenty miles or more belonged to King Herod of Galilee, and was part of the Holy Land, and was inhabited by Jews. Jesus had apparently never spent much time there, so now He gathered every disciple He could depend upon, and sent out no less than seventy into the towns and villages.

He, too, went about the country-side teaching,

and did many wonderful acts of mercy, and crowds flocked to Him and listened with delight. He taught much as He had done in Galilee, sometimes saying the same things over again.

But even here the suspicious faces of scribes and Pharisees looked out at Him, keeping watch for an opportunity to put Him in the wrong or make Him seem foolish.

The women above all were quick to know the tenderness and love of Jesus. They were not learned in argument, and therefore saw the simple beauty of His life the more readily.

One day such as had little children had the happy thought that they would bring them to Him, that He might bless them. The children were too little to understand His words, and they did not need healing, for they were not sick ; but the mothers thought that in after years, when they were growing into men and women, it would be good for them to know that this great Prophet with the eyes of love had laid His hands upon them.

Jesus must have been teaching on the outskirts of a country town. The winter rains had fallen, and the moist earth slept. Soon myriads of flowers would open their many-hued eyes to the sweet

spring sunshine, but as yet He would see only the rolling green pasture-land, crossed now and again by a shepherd with his flock. Suddenly, out of the shadow of the narrow crooked streets, where the little white houses were crowded shoulder to shoulder, came the rush of little feet, and children in bright, scanty garments flashed into the open. They laughed and tumbled over one another in their haste, and none of them were afraid, for they knew in a moment that here was one with a ready welcome for all children. Behind came the mothers, carrying little babies in their strange, stiff swaddling clothes, while about their skirts hung those who had just learnt to walk.

Jesus loved children more than any one else we read of in all the books of the Bible. It is only from Him we learn anything about the games which the Jewish children played. In Job we read about some one playing with a bird; and Zechariah tells us that in the New Jerusalem "the streets of the city shall be full of boys and girls playing in the streets thereof"; but it is Jesus who tells us about the games which the children enjoyed most. These were weddings and funerals.

There were no processions in Jewish towns save

when some one was married or some one died. The marriage procession was very joyful, and the people went merrily along, singing and sometimes carrying torches. In the funeral procession the people, following the dead, wept, and beat upon their breasts, and shrieked aloud. The children would wait for hours in the hope of seeing either. It was all very exciting and interesting to them. Then, when the heat of the day was over, they would gather in the market-place, and bring out their little reed-pipes and march round, shouting and singing, and would wind through the narrow streets, where the men and women, the day's work over, sat at the open door and laughed as they passed. Sometimes, too (I am not sure that it was very nice of them), they would pretend to mourn and cry and sob, and walk solemnly, as though going to the sepulchre.

I think Jesus, too, must have paused in the cool of sunset to watch them pass, and He knew just how they behaved. He was one day blaming people who were neither satisfied with John the Baptist, who was stern and sad, nor with Himself, who was glad and bright. He said: "They are like children that sit in the market-place and call

one to another ; which say, We piped unto you, and ye did not dance ; we wailed unto you, and ye did not weep !” They were pettish, and did not know their own minds. Jesus had seen that sometimes the children sulked, and would play neither a merry game nor a sad one.

But these little ones of Peræa, as they ran to Him with outstretched arms, were gay and happy. At this moment they understood our Lord better than the disciples who were standing by Him and grew angry that the women should think that their great Master could be troubled with little children, and bade them go away.

Jesus rebuked His comrades and said, “Suffer little children to come unto Me, and forbid them not : for of such is the kingdom of God.” Then He taught them as He had done once before in Capernaum, saying, “Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall in no wise enter therein.” Little children cling and trust and receive, and do not think what people say of them. Those who would be followers of Jesus must learn to trust Him, and to forget themselves as the little ones do.

Then Jesus not only touched the children, which

was all the mothers had hoped, but folded them in His strong arms, and held them to His breast, and laid His hands upon them, and blessed them. Sometimes, centuries ago, children with diseased faces were taken to be touched by a king, for it was thought the king's hand could heal them. It was not so. The king's hand was the same as any other man's. But Jesus was a king whose hand and word brought sure blessings. Wise mothers who brought their little ones to Him! Glad children who felt His dear hand upon their heads! And He is still the same. He is the children's Elder Brother and Great Friend to-day, never thinking you too small to love, and never too busy to hear your prayer, although the whole of the great round world and all men's lives are in His hand.



Hanfstaengl.

JESUS BLESSING LITTLE CHILDREN.

From Picture (Rembrandt School) in the National Gallery, London.

CHAPTER XXXIII

JESUS AND THE GREAT QUESTION

JESUS had finished His work in a little town of Peræa, and had set out with His disciples for another village, when he heard hurrying steps behind Him, and a richly-dressed young man ran panting to His side, and kneeling in the dust, said :

“Good Master, what shall I do, that I may inherit eternal life?”

This was a very common question among the scribes. They would spend whole days in discussing how men could be sure of eternal life, and they made all manner of fine distinctions as to the deeds which were most pleasing to God.

This young man, who belonged to the noblest and wealthiest class in the nation, had listened eagerly to all their arguments, but was satisfied

with none. He could not endure the thought that after death came nothing more; that life was like a flame, to be blown out by a passing wind, and after that only shadows. Then stories were brought to him of the wandering Prophet who taught and healed the sick. Perhaps he had lingered wistfully on the edge of a crowd and heard Jesus speak with the authority of one in close communion with God, and marked the pure spirit that was shining in that worn face, and the desire grew keen and strong in his heart to hear what He would say in this great matter. Yet he could not quite make up his mind to appeal to one who was not a rabbi, and mingled so freely with the common people. And thus he waited in uncertainty, till word reached him that Jesus was leaving the town. In that moment anxiety overcame all his hesitation, and hurrying down the road, to the amazement of bystanders who knew his high position, he flung himself like a suppliant at the feet of a king.

He came with an old question, but filled it with such an ardent longing, that his sincerity was evident. Jesus did not answer immediately, but in His turn asked a question, saying, "Why callest thou Me good? there is none good save One, even

God." I think it was as though He had said, "Thou, who hast such longing for the life of the spirit after death, dost thou come to Me simply as to a fellow-questioner, or have the eyes of thy spirit been opened to see in Me one who holds the greatest secret of God?" For He saw at once that "Good Master" had been but a sign of respect.

He reminded the young man of the commandments. The answer came, "All these have I kept from my youth up: what lack I yet?" Jesus looked at him and saw how winning and lovable he was, kneeling at His feet, with his fine, thoughtful face upturned, and his eyes filled with the restlessness of an unsatisfied soul, and He loved him.

But our Lord saw, too, that here was one who loved most of all that life should be filled with the beauty of material things. This man loved to pore over his precious manuscripts, and finger ornaments of finely-chased gold; he delighted in the marble pavements of Greek craftsmen, and yet more to go out in the early morning and let his eyes sweep over the terraced vineyards, where the clusters of grapes hung ripening in the sun,—all his. And out

of his great riches he gave but little to the poor. Wealth was binding him with chains to the earth.

“One thing thou lackest,” said Jesus. “Go sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven; and come follow Me.” The eager, listening face clouded. The young man thought of life stripped of all these things he loved, and it seemed bare and grey. Slowly he rose from his knees and turned away. His head was bowed, and his feet dragged, and more than once he half turned back. He was sorrowful, for Jesus had won his admiration and almost his love; but he went away. Our Lord went on His journey to the cross and to the glory of God; but this young man, who might have been a second John, returned reluctant and joyless to his great possessions.

This was not the first time that the question had been put to Jesus. One day earlier in His ministry a lawyer had come to Him, and asked, “What must I do to inherit eternal life?” He wanted to tempt Him into saying something with which he could find fault.

“What is written in the law?” asked Jesus; “how readest thou?” The lawyer answered by

quoting from the Old Testament: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself."

"Thou hast answered right," said Jesus simply, "This do, and thou shalt live."

But the lawyer felt that he had not shone in this conversation. He had been told to keep the commandments, as though he had not been keeping them already. He would not lose this opportunity for an argument, so He said to Jesus:

"And who is my neighbour?"

Perhaps he expected a long discussion as to the distance between those who could be reckoned neighbours. But Jesus wished to touch his conscience, not to feed his vanity. Therefore He told this story:

A traveller on the rough, desert road between Jerusalem and Jericho was attacked by thieves, who stole his purse and stripped him of his raiment, and when he resisted, half killed him, and left him lying by the roadside, bleeding, thirsty, and scorched by the sun. By chance a certain priest, who had perhaps been taking his turn at the Temple in offering the daily sacrifices, passed that way. He

saw the wounded man and heard his faint groans, but kept on his journey, not troubling even to cross over to see if it were an honest man who lay in this extremity. What had a priest to do with stray sufferers? "It serves him right very likely," thought he. And yet he was a priest of the pitiful God.

Next came a Levite—one who was occupied in the Temple too,—not in making sacrifices, but in cleansing it, and probably in singing in the choir. He, too, saw the wounded man, and actually crossed the road to look, but was quite unmoved, and kept on his way as though there had been but a dying sheep in the path.

The next traveller, however, was a Samaritan, and the pitiable sight filled him with compassion. He softened the aching wounds with oil and bound them up, and poured wine down his throat to revive him, and then lifting him on his own ass, brought him slowly to the nearest inn. Business was waiting this merchant, and he could not stay to watch over the man he had rescued, but he left some money with the host, and said, "Take care of him : and whatsoever thou spendest more, when I come again, I will repay thee."

When Jesus had ended His story He turned to the lawyer, and, just as before, made him answer his own question.

“Which now of these three, thinkest thou, was neighbour unto him who fell among thieves?” The lawyer answered as if the words were being dragged from him :

“He that showed mercy on him.”

He could not bring himself to say “the Samaritan”; for it was hateful to him that Jesus should have shown that the Samaritan had kept the law more truly, and had made more sure of eternal life, than a priest or a Levite. Then said Jesus, “Go thou and do likewise.” For once this talkative scribe was silenced. “Deeds, not words,” said Jesus as plainly as could be; and the man of words slunk from His presence.

A great Jewish teacher had taught, “Do not unto others what ye would not that they should do unto you.” Jesus glorified that teaching in the light of His love, and taught not only that we should not do an unkindness, but more, we should do active kindnesses, and said, “Whatsoever ye would that others should do to you, do ye also to them.” He set that old and beautiful saying in

Leviticus, of which men had almost lost sight, in the forefront of His teaching, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself."

If many found this difficult, He left us a commandment still harder to obey when He said, "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you"; but to this hard saying He added a lovely thought—that in so doing we should be the very children of God. And when He who is love unspeakable fills our hearts with His own spirit, what seemed impossible becomes only difficult, and what was difficult becomes easy.

CHAPTER XXXIV

HOW JESUS RAISED LAZARUS FROM THE DEAD

THE home which Jesus loved best was in Bethany, about two miles from Jerusalem. It was the house of Martha and Mary, who lived with their brother Lazarus. Jesus loved them all, and they were like sisters and a brother to Him; and Mary and Lazarus at least saw with as clear eyes as the Beloved Apostle that this was the true Messiah of Israel.

Martha and Mary were very different in character. Martha was active and energetic and a good housewife, and had not much imagination. Mary was thoughtful and quiet, and perhaps a little dreamy, and her eyes were "homes of silent prayer."

Once, when Jesus was coming to stay with them, Martha wished to give a feast in His honour, and was full of preparations. But hardly

had He entered and sat down than Mary came softly and sat at His feet, longing only to hear more of God's kingdom; and I am afraid she forgot all about the feast. As the hours wore on, poor Martha, who was thus left single-handed, grew hot and tired, and a sense of injustice rankled in her heart that all the work should have fallen to her share. Instead of coming quietly to Mary and whispering that she needed help, she said out loud :

“Master, dost Thou not care that my sister did leave me to serve alone? bid her therefore that she help me.” But Jesus answered, “Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things; but few things are needful: for Mary hath chosen the good part, which shall not be taken away from her.” As so often, His simple words meant a great deal.

Mary had guessed right in thinking the feast and its many dishes of little importance, and that He would love better to talk quietly with His friends. But He meant to teach a deeper truth than this. The “one thing needful” is to love God and to learn His will, and this was the good part Mary had chosen. Martha was concerned

as to what people would say, and was more anxious for the success of the feast than to learn God's truth, even though His own Son sat within her doors. So Jesus had to teach her this lesson. But her heart was just as warm as Mary's; and when He rested under her roof at the close of a day of toil and argument in Jerusalem, it was like a meadow by a streamside after the heat and parched rocks of the desert.

Some weeks after Jesus had gone into Peræa, a messenger reached Him in haste, bringing the news that a great sorrow overhung the little household at Bethany.

Though they longed for the comfort of His presence, they did not like to ask Him to leave His work and return; but there was a pleading note in their message, "Lord, he whom Thou lovest is sick." Yet though Lazarus was very dear to Him, Jesus did not hurry to his side at once, but lingered two whole days in Peræa. Then He said to His disciples, "Let us go into Judæa again."

But they answered, "Rabbi, the Jews were but now seeking to stone Thee; and goest Thou thither again?"

“Are there not twelve hours in the day?” said Jesus. “If a man walk in the day, he stumbleth not, because he seeth the light of this world.” He meant that we have only so long in which to do our duty, and while we do it, we are walking in the light, and cannot make a mistake whatever dangers assail us.

Then He added, “Our friend Lazarus sleepeth; but I go, that I may awake him out of sleep.”

Perhaps John the mystic remembered the sleep of the little daughter of Jairus, and knew that his Master spoke of death; but the others had forgotten, and said, well pleased, thinking that in this case He need not return:

“Lord, if he is fallen asleep, he will recover.”

Then said Jesus plainly, “Lazarus is dead. And I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, that your faith may be strengthened; nevertheless, let us go unto him.”

They saw at last that He was not to be moved from His purpose; and Thomas, who loved Him very deeply, but who always saw the black side of things, said despairingly:

“Let us go also that we may die with Him.”

Thus the little company set out for Bethany

with sad faces and downcast hearts, for they felt that in Judæa only disaster awaited them, and the time in Peræa had been filled with something of the peace and joy of earlier days.

When Jesus reached Bethany, Lazarus had been in the grave four days, and many Jews had come from Jerusalem to comfort the sisters, for the family was of some importance and was well known. As soon as word was brought to Martha that her brother's friend drew near, she hurried out to meet Him, while Mary sat still in the house, heavy with grief, and not having heard of His approach. Martha greeted Him with words of bitter regret :

"Lord, if Thou hadst been here, my brother had not died. And even now I know that, whatsoever Thou shalt ask of God, God will give Thee."

Jesus, seeking to comfort her, answered, "Thy brother shall rise again." And Martha, not understanding, said, "I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day." Then Jesus spoke those glorious words of majesty and love which still sound in our ears like the trumpet-blast of the resurrection angel, "I am the resur-

rection, and the life: he that believeth on Me, though he die, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth on Me shall never die." He did not mean that we should not still be called to pass through the gates of what we call death, but there would no longer be the thought of a dim and colourless shadowland beyond, but of life brighter, fuller, and freer than ever before. "Believest thou this?" asked Jesus.

Martha, awed, and even yet not wholly understanding, answered humbly, "Yea, Lord: I have believed that Thou art the Christ, the Son of God." Then she left Him outside Bethany, and returning quickly to her sister, whispered, "The Master is come, and He calleth for thee." In silence, and perhaps with a formless hope rising in her heart, Mary arose and hurried out, and through the village street, and the Jews, thinking that she went to weep at the grave, followed her. When she had found Jesus still at the spot where Martha had spoken with Him, she sank on her knees, and the anguish of the thought that had been with her all these four terrible days burst from her lips: "Lord, if Thou hadst been here, my brother had not died." When Jesus saw her tears, her grief

pierced His soul, and He asked the Jews who stood weeping beside her, "Where have ye laid him?" and they said, "Lord, come and see," and as they led Him to the sepulchre the very Son of God wept. I think it was not only the grief of those dear to Him that touched Him, but the pain of the great world lay heavy on His spirit. The Jews said, "Behold how He loved him!" but others murmured, remembering the last miracle which had startled Jerusalem, "Could not this man, which opened the eyes of the blind, have caused that even this man should not have died?"

The sepulchre was a cave in the rock, and the entrance to it was blocked by a great slab of stone, and this Jesus bade them remove. But Martha, who also stood at His side, and even in the misery of her loss must still put in her word to set Him right, blurted out, "Lord, by this time he is not fit to see; for he hath been dead four days."

"Said I not unto thee," said Jesus sadly, "that, if thou believedst, thou shouldest see the glory of God?" Then lifting up His eyes He prayed to the Father, and when He had finished He cried in a loud voice, "Lazarus, come forth."

Then upon the startled ears of the bystanders

fell the sound of slow, soft movement, and out of the shadows of the cave came a man bound in grave-clothes.

“Loose him,” said Jesus, “and let him go.”

Lazarus, who had passed four days in the great mystery of death, stood once more in this life, and there is no picture left to us of the joy of those two sisters. It must have been deep, and with something of awe in it. They may have wondered whether he who had passed through this strange experience could ever be the same as the brother who had lived with them so long. Jesus had said, “He sleepeth,” and perhaps from that deepest slumber in which God wraps His children, he had but awakened the simpler and stronger and purer of spirit.

Thus Jesus proved the truth of His saying, “I am the resurrection, and the life.” Death and the grave were seen to be His slaves.

Many of the Jews believed on Him, for they could not explain away this miracle, which sounded like a thunder-clap in their ears, proclaiming Jesus the Lord of Death. But some of them went away to the Pharisees and told them all that happened. A council was at once called, and the

chief priests said, "What are we doing to let this man go on working these wonders? If we let Him alone, all will believe on Him; and the Romans will come and take away our place and nation." They had made up their minds that Jesus could not be right. Even His victory over the grave only alarmed them. As more and more light flashed upon them, they but closed their eyes more closely. He had made one more appeal to their hard hearts to believe in His love and power. It was in vain.

From that day they planned to put Him to death. Formerly it was the people who had sought to stone Jesus, and only in a sudden storm of rage. Now the leaders of religion in cold blood determined at all costs to destroy Him. They even discussed whether Lazarus should be put to death, so that the living proof of Jesus' power might be hidden from the eyes of wondering visitors. Clearly the end was drawing very near. The shadow of the cross was falling on Jesus.

CHAPTER XXXV

THE LAST JOURNEY TO JERUSALEM

THE next time we see Jesus, He is once more the centre of a Galilæan crowd; familiar faces press round Him, and the homely sound of the Galilæan tongue fills the air.

He was so patient and pitiful, that even yet He had it in His mind to make one last appeal, and this time to the whole nation. He could only make it at the Passover season, when from all parts of the country the Jews flocked to the sacred city. So He had withdrawn swiftly and secretly from Bethany to the little town of Ephraim near the Jordan, where He could be safe from the murderous plots of the Pharisees and chief priests. Then when bands of pilgrims from Galilee began to throng along the valley of the river, and through Jericho to Jerusalem, He joined them; for though

He had disappointed their hopes of a leader against the Romans, some were still proud of Him, and in their company He was safe for a little while.

Not far from His side were the disciples, with brighter faces than they had shown for many weeks. All this time they had been cherishing a hope of an earthly kingdom. Jesus had tried to make plain that He was soon to die, and by the cruel death of crucifixion, and sought to give them comfort in the thought of His resurrection. But they believed Him to be speaking in parables, and only to mean that His cause, which seemed to be perishing, should rise again in strength, and now their flickering hopes were fanned to a bright flame as they saw Him once more the centre of a dense multitude.

As they neared the city gate the familiar cry for mercy fell upon their ears. A blind beggar, well known to the people as Bartimæus, had taken his seat there day after day for many years. He sat wrapped in his cloak and covered with dust, beseeching the charity of the passers-by. Rumours had reached him of the Master and Preacher who wandered about the country. Perhaps some time before this, as he sat in his

accustomed place uttering his monotonous appeal for alms, some friend had touched his shoulder and said, "Hark, Bartimæus, that is Jesus of Nazareth that hath but just passed thee," and Bartimæus grew silent to hear a retreating footfall lose itself in the distance. As he learned more, an eager hope raised its head within him, and day by day his quickened ear waited for the coming of that same footstep that this time should not pass him by.

At last, before this Passover, came the tramp of hundreds of feet drawing nearer and nearer, and out of the hubbub a voice spoke the blessed name of "Jesus of Nazareth"; and though no single footstep could be distinguished in the confused tramp of many feet, Bartimæus knew that his moment had come. He shouted out in an agony of fear, lest the Healer should pass and leave him in the darkness, "Jesus, Thou Son of David, have mercy on me."

Those nearest rebuked him. "Hush," they said; "hush your beggar's cry. Don't disturb the Master." But the blind man's voice only rose the louder above the crowd, "Thou Son of David, have mercy on me."

A dozen voices were in Jesus' ear, and many people hung upon His lips. But He heard that cry as though no other spoke, just as to-day each prayer is in His heart though a million reach His ear at once.

He stood still and commanded that the beggar be brought to Him. Then the people changed their manner and said to Bartimæus, "Be of good cheer : rise, He calleth thee."

The man leapt to his feet and cast away his cloak. It was his protection through the day and his covering by night, and he had no money to buy another. But what of that? Light, light might be had for the asking!

As he drew near, Jesus asked him, "What wilt thou that I should do unto thee?"

"Lord," said Bartimæus, without an instant's hesitation or doubt, "that I receive my sight."

Just as swiftly came the answer, "Receive thy sight; thy faith hath made thee whole."

In that instant the veil of darkness fell away, and his startled eyes beheld the swaying crowd, the palm-trees, and the towers of Jericho, and, dearest sight of all, the face of his Healer. He cried aloud his joy and his thanks to God, and the

people joined in his praise. With shouts of gladness the crowd swung into the city.

How easily might Bartimæus have missed the great gift! This was the one chance of regaining his sight, for never again would Jesus pass this way. Had he let the crowd silence him, or had he stayed to find a safe place for his cloak, or had he feared to ask the gift or doubted, he had sat in the dust all his days, begging the chance charity of the passers-by. But he neither hesitated nor mistrusted, and the light of the day was his for ever.

As Jesus passed into Jericho, He espied a quaint figure in the low branches of a tree which overhung the road. It was not a boy, as you might have expected, nor a poor wayfarer accustomed to all sorts of experiences, but one of the richest men of the city, Zacchæus, the well-known head of the tax-gatherers. They were particularly influential here because of the trade in balsam and the taxes to be levied on goods passing from Judæa, under its Roman ruler Pontius Pilate, into Peræa, under King Herod. He looked very odd perched on a branch and half hidden by the leaves, but he did not mind that. Too short to be able to look

over the heads of the people, but bent on seeing this Prophet who had actually chosen a tax-gatherer to be His comrade, he ran on before and climbed like a schoolboy.

Perhaps he hoped to remain hidden ; but Jesus, ever quick to discern those who were ready for His message, stood still beneath the shadow of the tree, and said, "Zacchæus, make haste, and come down ; for to-day I must abide at thy house." Jesus had determined to win this man, who was despised by his fellow-citizens, and He knew that to claim his hospitality was the shortest road to success, so He invited Himself to Zacchæus' house.

Zacchæus scrambled quickly down and welcomed Him joyfully. But the people murmured, and said, "He is gone in to lodge with a man that is a sinner." Jesus knew what they would say, but He never cared for men's admiration nor feared to lose it. What He sought was love and loyalty. He could see by the eagerness and decision of Zacchæus that he was a man of warm heart and strong will, worth winning and eager to be won. What mattered the disapproval of a fickle crowd if this soul might be filled with love and faith ? Before Jesus went on His way,

Zacchæus stood forth and before them all solemnly vowed himself to a life of charity and fair dealing.

“Behold the half of my goods, Lord, I hereby give to the poor; and whatever unjust gain I have made from any one, I now restore fourfold.”

In deep joy Jesus exclaimed, “Now is salvation come to this house, since he, too, is a son of Abraham.”

He meant that, however the Pharisees might forbid the synagogues to the publicans, and so deny them the right of their race, such a man was in a true spiritual sense the son of Abraham; for when the call came to him he rose up and obeyed it.

While Jesus was yet in Jericho, He told His excited followers a parable, to warn them that they were mistaken in thinking that the kingdom of God was about to appear visibly. He tried to show them that He was more like a king who was leaving them, with great gifts to use for Him, and that after many years He would return, and then His kingdom would appear in its fulness. We are still waiting for the second coming of our Lord, so that the story is for us as well as for His disciples. This was the parable:

A prince was obliged to go into a far country

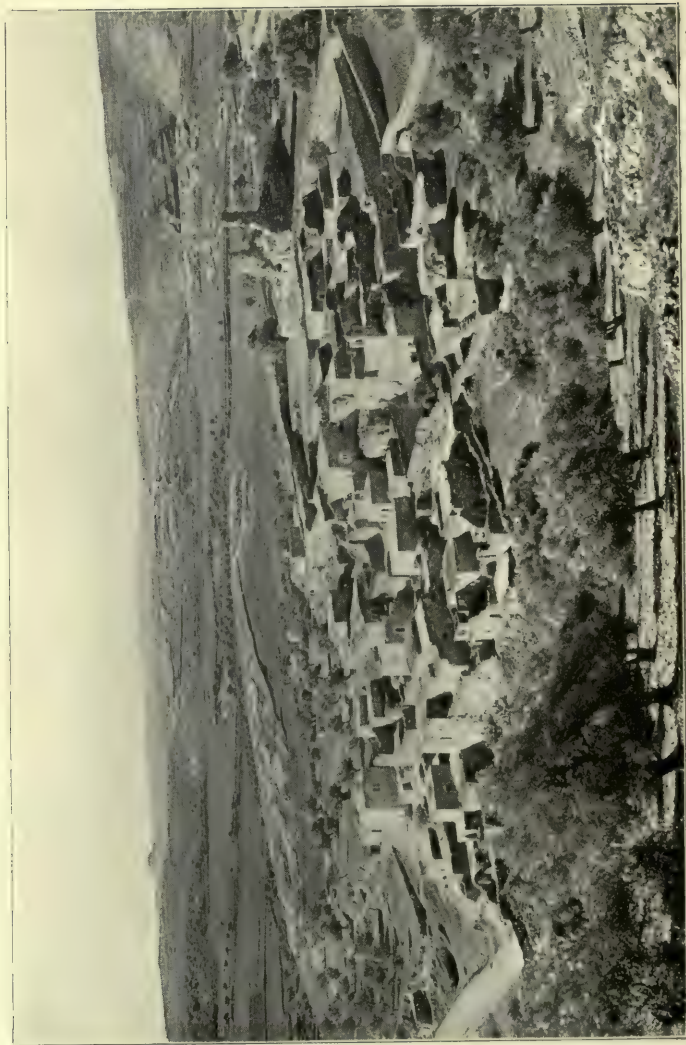
to receive a kingdom, and before he set out he called together his ten servants and gave them each an Eastern pound, which is worth more than three pounds of our money, and told them to trade with it till his return. They would, of course, have much less to do in his absence. Now though he was a just ruler his citizens hated him, and sent a messenger after him, saying, "We will not have you to reign over us."

At last the day came when he returned more splendid and powerful than ever, and he called his servants to give an account of their trust. The first was an able man who had worked diligently, and he said, "Lord, thy pound hath gained ten pounds." His master said, "Well done, thou good servant: because thou hast been faithful in a very little, have thou authority over ten cities." The second servant came, saying, "Lord, thy pound hath gained five pounds." The prince did not give the same high praise, for he had done less; but seeing that he, too, had worked honestly, said, "Take thou also authority over five cities," Then came the third servant with a very different story. He was lazy and insolent, and plumed himself on having taken great care of the money

because he had kept it wrapped up. He excused his laziness by accusing his master of undue harshness.

“Lord,” said he, “behold, here is thy pound, which I have kept laid up in a napkin: for I feared thee, because thou art a severe man.” Then the prince answered in anger: “Out of thine own mouth will I judge thee, thou wicked servant. Thou knewest I was a severe man; wherefore then gavest thou not my money into a bank, that at my coming I might have received interest for my money?” When he had rebuked the idle servant he said, “Take from him the pound, and give it to him that hath ten pounds.” The people, who were eagerly listening to Jesus, cried out, “Lord, he hath ten pounds,” meaning that surely he needed no more. But Jesus did not answer the interruption. He only added the more impressively, “To him that hath shall be given; and from him that hath not, shall be taken away even that which he hath.”

His meaning was, that to possess a gift truly it must be used, and any one who lets it lie idle is already losing it. Those who have used their gifts to the full are ready and fit to receive others. He



BETHANY AT THE PRESENT DAY.
From a Photograph.

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went on to tell how the prince ordered that all those who had refused to accept him as ruler should be brought before him and slain.

His hearers did not fully understand this parable, but the solemn words quieted them; and as He turned towards the steep road to Jerusalem, the disciples followed, hardly knowing what to expect.

Late in the afternoon they arrived footsore at the door of the home in Bethany, and were welcomed and cared for.

The next day was the Sabbath, and Jesus remained quietly in the house till the evening, when the Sabbath was over, and then rose up to go to the house of Simon the Leper, where a feast was prepared in His honour because He had raised Lazarus from the dead. The shadow of the cross lay upon Him, and He was in no mood for feasting; but because He would not disappoint those who loved Him, He took His place at the laden table. Lazarus was there—surely with a new look in his eyes since his return through the gates of death—and Mary and Martha.

But Mary had not spent a whole day with the

Master without learning, through her great love and sympathy, that He felt death near. She was perhaps the only one who at that time had perfectly understood the mind of our Lord. She had longed to do Him honour, and in His absence had bought a box of very costly ointment of spikenard, and now, when the feast had begun, she came behind Him and began to anoint His head as though He had been a great king. But as she did so, it was as though she had a vision of the end. She seemed to see Him lying cold and lifeless, and with a pang of sorrow turned and poured the precious ointment upon His feet, as though embalming the beloved dead, and, kneeling, wiped them with her unbound hair. The sweet fragrance of the spikenard filled the house, and the sweeter fragrance of love filled the soul of Jesus.

But Judas Iscariot exclaimed, "Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred pence, and given to the poor?" It was not that he cared for the poor, for his heart was growing hard and cold. He was treasurer to Jesus and the little band of disciples, and for some time had been taking money for himself from the common purse, and

he could not keep back the envious words as he thought how much he might have pilfered from so large a sum.

But Jesus' answer came like a chill breath of coming desolation. "Let her alone," said He; "she hath done it beforehand for my burial. The poor ye have always with you, but Me ye have not always." His burying! Had He then spoken no parable when He told them of His coming death? Had this woman understood when even the apostles had failed? How different Mary's action looked now! She could not save her Lord from death, nor go with Him to the cruel end, but at least she could show Him that when His body had been broken by His enemies there should not be lacking loving hands to do the last offices. Love had opened her eyes to see, and love had taught her how to heal His bruised spirit. The words which Jesus spoke in her praise have gone echoing down the centuries:

"Wheresoever this gospel shall be preached throughout the whole world, that also which this woman hath done shall be spoken of for a memorial of her."

It was great praise, but the lesson the deed

taught was great too. Unless our hearts are able to understand and minister to our Lord, we cannot heal the sorest griefs nor carry true comfort to the poor and suffering.

It would be our worst shame to remember all save Him who passed through the dark gates of a dreadful death to give us peace and joy.

Thus the last Sabbath of our Lord's life on earth was ended.

BOOK III

THE DEATH AND RESURRECTION OF
JESUS

CHAPTER XXXVI

JESUS PROCLAIMS HIMSELF THE CHRIST

IT was the Sunday before the Passover Feast when Jesus prepared to leave Bethany and enter Jerusalem. The spring flowers made all the land gay, the gentle sunshine brightened the village streets, and the roads across Mount Olivet were crowded with pilgrims, hurrying into the sacred city, for this was the appointed day for each family to choose the Passover lamb. It was a day of joy, when people from every corner of the land were gathered together, all in holiday mood, and ready for any new excitement.

Jesus did not walk quietly into the city as He had so often done, but when He left Bethany, sent two of His disciples to bring a young ass on which no one had ever sat. The colt could not be brought without its mother, so both were led to Jesus. In

the East the ass is used as much as the horse, and is often a handsome animal, stronger and larger than with us, with glossy coat, "shiny black, or satiny white, or sleek mouse-colour." The richest men are not ashamed to use an ass for travelling.

Jesus mounted the colt, a rude procession was formed, and as they passed down the road, many recognised Him and followed in His train. Soon they met some of the pilgrims who had seen Him heal the blind man in Jericho, and had come out of Jerusalem to meet Him in Bethany. When they saw the crowd following, they turned to go back to Jerusalem, and formed the front of the procession. Jesus rode on in the midst of a great and joyous multitude.

Why did He act thus? What did He mean to teach the people? He was making His last appeal to His nation. He was declaring, as He had never declared before, that He was the Messiah, the long-looked-for Messenger of God. An ancient prophet had said that the Messiah would enter Jerusalem after this fashion. These were his words: "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy King cometh unto thee: He is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding



Alinari.

THE TRIUMPHAL ENTRY INTO JERUSALEM.

From the Picture by Fra Angelico in the Academy, Florence.

upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass." Jesus set Himself to fulfil this prophecy, that all might understand who it was that was among them.

And the people understood in part, but they did not remember that the Messiah should be lowly, and that the ass was a sign that He did not come as a leader of armies, but as a king of peace. They broke the wide-spreading fronds from the palm-trees, and the branches with little silvery leaves from the olives, and scattered them in the way, as before a conqueror. At last, at last, they thought, the prophet of Nazareth would fulfil their wishes! Many took off their outer robes and spread them before Him in a gay carpet of crimson, faded blue, and striped black and white. As they reached the crest of a little hill, and for a moment the towers of the city were seen, shouts of joy broke from many throats, and they cried: "Hosanna to the Son of David. Blessed is the King that cometh in the name of the Lord. Blessed is the kingdom of our father David. Hosanna, peace and glory in the highest."

Jesus alone carried a heavy heart. He heard the shouts of the people's praise, but knew that

their thoughts were not changed, and that when He should show them the kind of King He really was, they would fall away and leave Him alone. He pierced the future still further, and saw the dreadful day when Jerusalem, the dear and sacred city, would be surrounded by her enemies, and humbled to the dust for the sins of her people.

Slowly the procession wound up the road, until the whole city burst upon His gaze. The white houses and golden pinnacles and great castle shone and flashed in the sunlight, and the mighty encircling walls seemed to defy the world. But before the eye of Jesus rose a picture of blackened houses and shattered walls, and flames bursting from the holy Temple itself, while foreign soldiers rushed through the streets with swords in their hands, and the pavements were stained with blood. He could not keep back His tears, and cried aloud to the city in its pride :

“ If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace ! but now they are hid from thine eyes. For the days shall come upon thee, that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round . . . and they shall not leave in thee one stone

upon another ; because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation."

But the procession never halted ; the cheers did not flag. None understood the tears of Jesus, and many did not notice them at all.

The crowd swept into Jerusalem and up to the Temple courts. The whole city was moved, and cried, "Who is it ? Who is this great One ?" The Galilæans answered, proud of their knowledge, "Jesus, the prophet of Galilee." Jesus dismounted at the entrance to the Temple and passed in. The people waited for some word from Him, or for some decisive deed. But He did nothing and said nothing. He only walked slowly round, viewing all things. Bit by bit the crowd melted away. Clearly the great rising was not to be that day. They did not understand the silence of Jesus. He was striving to teach them that He was a spiritual king—King of the hearts of men ; His only weapons love and truth.

But the street boys had caught up the words the procession shouted, and for the rest of that day and the next they ran hither and thither through the streets, and even ventured into the Temple court, crying, "Hosanna to the Son of

David!" The sour-faced Pharisees commanded Him to hush the children's noisy glee. But He would not. He answered, "Yea; have ye never read, Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings Thou hast perfected praise"?

The children did not perfectly understand what they said, but they loved Jesus for His kind face and noble ways. They had simple hearts, and were ready to welcome Him as a king without an army and without a crown. Therefore He loved their praise, as He still loves children's songs of joy and love.

When the evening was come, and the people could not easily see Him in the dark, He quietly left the Temple and led His disciples back to Bethany.

Next morning the crowds in Jerusalem were all astir with expectation. What would Jesus do? Would He raise His standard to-day against the Romans? He came straight to the Temple, early in the morning, and entered the great Court of the Gentiles. You remember how, three years before, He had driven out the cattle and sheep, and silenced the din of the market held there. But things were as bad as ever. While He was away in Galilee, the

merchants had come back, and the money-changers set up their tables anew, no priest forbidding them. Indeed, people sometimes took a short cut through the Temple, and carried their parcels that way, so that the true worshippers were worse off than ever.

Jesus, who had marked all this the previous day, began at once to drive out all the merchants with their flocks and herds, the sellers of doves, and the money-changers. He cried, "It is written, My house shall be called a house of prayer; but ye have made it a den of thieves." How the merchants scowled when they heard their dishonesty denounced, and saw their hopes of gain gone, just at the moment when Jerusalem was crowded and they hoped to make much money! For the moment they thought of resisting; but when they looked round on the multitude of Galilæan peasants, sturdy and brave, ready to side with Jesus, they slunk away like beaten curs. And Jesus stopped the passers-by who carried bundles, and would not suffer so much as an empty dish to be carried through the Temple. So He purified His Father's house once more.

It was His first act after He had proclaimed Himself King, and no deed could say so plainly

that He was a spiritual Lord. It was not an attack upon the Romans, but upon the wicked among the Jews. It was not a deed to make them rich, but to make them pure. Then the blind and lame — there were still some left in Jerusalem — came into the quiet court, and were healed by Him. Instead of the harsh voices of the cattle-sellers and the jingle of money, the glad words of those who again saw the light and trod the earth, filled the Temple.

How plainly Jesus was saying to the people, "I am Love; I am Pity; I am Holiness. Trust Me. Take Me as King, although I am not the kind of king you expect." But when the evening came, and He once more went back to Bethany, those who had followed Him all day went home, murmuring and discontented. Yet they said, "To-morrow. To-morrow He will show Himself a real king."

CHAPTER XXXVII

THE DAY OF QUESTIONINGS

YOU must be wondering how it happened that the scribes and Pharisees allowed Jesus to enter the Temple court and to cleanse it without hindrance. The fact is, they were at their wits' end. When they saw the multitude saluting Jesus on Palm-Sunday, as that day is called, they felt that all their schemes were useless, and said one to another, "Perceive ye how we prevail nothing? the whole world is gone after Him." Eager as ever to destroy, they could do nothing while He was the popular favourite. They hung on the edge of the crowd, like wild beasts, eager to devour, but afraid to show their teeth.

On the Tuesday morning they determined to fall back on their old plan, and try to entangle Jesus in His talk, that they might make Him a

laughing-stock before the people, or cause Him to appear a traitor either to the nation or to Cæsar. No sooner had He appeared in the Temple than some of the leading priests and foremost citizens of Jerusalem came to Him and asked, "By what authority doest Thou these things? and who gave Thee this authority?" The crowd listened respectfully; for these men, with their venerable faces and white hair, were known to be the leaders of the nation. It seemed a fair question. How would their prophet answer it?

Jesus did not refuse to reply, but He first asked His questioners to prove that they had the right to put Him under examination. He tested them and said, "I also will ask you one thing, which if ye tell Me, I likewise will tell you by what authority I do these things. The baptism of John, whence was it? from heaven, or of men?" A little murmur of approval ran through the crowd. Yes; that was a fair question too, and an easy question. Every one knew John Baptist was sent from God.

But the faces of the aged priests and the elders grew perplexed. They drew apart and discussed among themselves. "If we shall say, From

heaven; He will say unto us, Why did ye not then believe him? But if we shall say, Of men; we fear the people: for all hold John as a prophet."

Jesus remained silent and all the people waited. At last the spokesman of the priests said to Him, as shortly and indifferently as he could, "We cannot tell." Some of their listeners were amazed; others were angry to hear it doubted that John was a prophet. The priests knew that Jesus had made them look ridiculous. For how absurd it was that those who set themselves up to lead the nation could form no judgment on such a matter. The leaders of the people should also be their guides. These baffled leaders could not say a word when He answered, "Neither tell I you by what authority I do these things."

But He did not let them depart without seeking to warn them once more. He in turn asked them a question. "What think ye? A certain man had two sons; and he came to the first, and said, Son, go work to-day in my vineyard. He answered and said, I will not; but afterward he repented, and went. And he came to the second, and said the same. And he answered and said, I

go, sir; and went not. Which of these two did the will of his father?"

It was such a simple story that it was impossible not to answer. They said, "The first." Then Jesus said most solemnly, "The publicans and the sinners go into the kingdom of heaven before you. For John came unto you, and ye believed him not; but the publicans and sinners believed him: and ye, when ye had seen it, never repented, that ye might believe him." All the people saw what Jesus meant. The priests and elders looked still more foolish than before, for they had confessed that the first son did his father's will, and here Jesus showed them plainly that they were like the second son, professing obedience, but failing to obey, even when their mistake was made plain to them.

Before they could move away, He told yet another parable, which set their behaviour in a still worse light, and warned them of the awful judgment they would meet:

A man of property planted a vineyard, and made it as good a vineyard as was possible. It was well fenced to keep the foxes out. It had a wine-press cut in the rock, so that the grapes

could be made into wine as soon as gathered. And to complete all, a tower was built, where the watchers could be stationed to protect the ripe grapes against robbers. The owner, before setting out on a long journey, let out the vineyard to some vine-dressers, who were to pay him by giving him a certain quantity of the fruit.

When the vintage-time drew near, he sent some of his servants to receive his portion. But the vine-dressers had begun to call the vineyard their own. They attacked the servants as soon as they appeared, and drove them off, beating one, wounding another with stones, and actually killing a third. The owner was very patient. When he heard this bad news, he did not punish the vine-dressers, but sent more servants. They were treated just as badly.

Last of all he sent his son, saying, "They will reverence my son." But when the vine-dressers saw their landlord's son coming, they said among themselves, "This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and let us seize on his inheritance." Then they took him and threw him out of the vineyard and killed him.

The people had been listening breathlessly.

He turned to them and said, "When the lord of the vineyard cometh, what will he do to these vine-dressers?" His hearers burst out, "He will miserably destroy those wicked men, and will let out his vineyard to others, who shall render him the fruits in their seasons." But the priests and elders eyed Him with fury, and pressed forward to lay hands on Him. For they saw, what the people saw too, that the parable was spoken against them: they were the wicked keepers of the vineyard, which was the land of Israel. But the friends of Jesus kept close round Him, and some of the crowd who carried swords half-drew their weapons to protect Him. Then the priests fell back, and turned and hurried forth. Beaten! beaten again! was the cry of their anger.

In a little while other questioners arrived. Some of the Pharisees and some of Herod's party came up to Jesus with as innocent and friendly an air as they could put on. They pretended to be honest men in a great difficulty; but they really wished to make Him offend against the Roman Governor of Jerusalem, so that He might be condemned as a rebel.

They began in a most complimentary way:

“Master, we know that Thou sayest and teachest rightly, and that Thou art never influenced by fear of men, and teachest the way of God truly.” The hypocrites! All the time they were hating Jesus and longing to kill Him. Then they said, “Is it lawful for us to give tribute unto Cæsar, or not?”

When the people heard this, they stood as if carved in stone, for it was a very crafty question. If Jesus said, “Pay tribute,” then many of the people would say He was no true lover of His country—no king for them. But if He said, “Do not pay tribute,” then His questioners would hurry off to the Governor, and say that a rebel was stirring up Jerusalem against Cæsar.

But Jesus’ wisdom was far superior to their cunning. He saw through their hypocrisy, and said, “Why tempt ye Me? Show Me a penny.” In a moment a Roman penny, a coin a little more than our sixpence in value, was thrust into His hand. “Whose image and whose name does it bear?” They answered and said, “Cæsar’s.” For just as our coins are stamped with the Sovereign’s head, so the Roman coins were stamped with the Emperor’s head; and many Roman coins were in use in Jerusalem, which was directly under a

Roman governor, and was not ruled as Galilee and Peræa were by a king appointed by Cæsar, but partly independent of him. Then He said, "Render to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and to God the things that are God's."

The coin had answered the crafty question. It was stamped with Cæsar's head, and showed they were under Cæsar's rule, and owed him tribute. The Pharisees could not say a word, for the money in their girdles witnessed against them. They knitted their brows and thought how they could catch hold of His words. But they remained silent. They were baffled once more.

And yet they had accomplished something. From that time the people saw plainly that Jesus would not lead them against the Romans. Those most eager for a rebellion finally left Him. In the end they preferred Barabbas, a robber but a warrior, to Jesus, the meek and righteous Hero of God.

And now some of the Sadducees drew near and tried to perplex Jesus with another question. They did not believe that the dead would rise again, but thought that they lived for ever in a dim under-world, and were scarcely more real than



Hanfstaengl.

JESUS AND THE TRIBUTE MONEY.

From the Picture by Titian in the Dresden Gallery.

shadows. The spokesman of the Sadducees told an impossible story of seven brothers who were all married in succession to the same wife, each one dying in turn. Then they asked, "In the resurrection, therefore, when they shall all rise, whose wife shall she be?"

Jesus did not seek to show them how foolish a story this was, but answered quite gravely: "Ye err, because ye know neither the Scriptures, nor the power of God. For when they rise from the dead, they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels which are in heaven." Then He went on to remind them how they had often read that God said to Moses, "I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." These words were spoken long after the fathers of the race had died. Yet God did not say, "I *was* the God of Abraham," but "I *am* the God of Abraham," showing that Abraham and Isaac and Jacob were really living in the time of Moses, although they had left the earth so many years before. The Sadducees were discomfited, and could not say a word.

All this time one scribe had been listening very carefully. He was impressed by the answers of

Jesus, and thought he should like to ask a question of this notable Teacher, whom every one was discussing so freely. He was really an honest man, and had no desire to entrap Jesus, but he did think that his question would be too difficult for a man untrained in the schools of the rabbis. So he asked, "Which is the first commandment of all?"

Jesus answered without a moment's hesitation, quoting from the Book of Deuteronomy, and from the same chapter as when He was tempted of Satan in the wilderness :

"Hear, O Israel ; The Lord our God is one Lord : and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength. This is the first commandment. And the second is like, namely this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these."

This was a very different answer from any the scribe had ever heard before, and he had often discussed the same question. The words of Jesus were so clear and practical that the most ignorant and humble could understand them, and yet He had left nothing more to be said. The scribe was

filled with admiration. He did not attempt to find fault with the words of Jesus, but just repeated them in a different way, as if he were thinking them over and over.

He answered : " Well, Master, Thou hast said the truth : for there is but one God ; and there is none other but He : and to love Him with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the soul, and with all the strength, and to love his neighbour as himself, is more than all whole burnt-offerings and sacrifices." That was a bold thing to say ; for they were standing in the Temple, and the smell of the burnt-offerings from the great brazen altar was in the air, and the priests all laid much more stress on sacrifices than on love.

But the scribe was an honest man—the first honest questioner Jesus had met that day—and spoke his mind. Jesus saw the candour in his eyes, and said, "Thou art not far from the kingdom of God." But "not far from" meant outside. The man's hand was near the latch of the door, but he was as really outside as those a thousand miles away. An open mind will bring men near to the kingdom, but only trust and obedience will lead them within. How did this fair-minded man

decide? Did he choose the light or the darkness? We do not know. All we can say is summed up in one chilling word—"Perhaps."

Jesus still waited. He was not afraid of His enemies. They could ask Him any other question. But they asked no more. They had been completely defeated. However clever their inquiries were, the answers of Jesus always exposed their double-mindedness and made plain that He was right. They gazed on Him with angry eyes, but dared not say a word; for the common people heard Him gladly, being able to follow all His arguments, and feeling that He was one of themselves. Besides, they were not unwilling to see the defeat of the priests and scribes, who often treated them with contempt.

So Jesus showed Himself not only the best, but also the wisest of all men. He was wiser than Solomon, who was most famous for his wisdom; and He was meeker than Moses, who was most famous for his meekness. But His heart was very sore as He saw how hardened His questioners had become.

CHAPTER XXXVIII

SUNLIGHT ON A DARK DAY

JESUS was weary of spirit after these discussions, and in hope of quiet, passed from the Court of the Gentiles to the inner Court of the Women, or of the Israelites as it was sometimes called. The entrance was through the gate called "Beautiful," wrought in shining brass, and so massive that twenty men could only just move it on its hinges. Under the marble colonnade in this inner court were placed thirteen trumpet-shaped money-chests, to receive the gifts of the worshippers. These were narrow at the mouth and widened out towards the bottom, and on each was an inscription telling for what particular purpose the offerings would be used.

Jesus sat down opposite, and watched the people crowding up with their money. Some were rich

and wore costly robes. Thrusting their hands into their girdles, they let the admiring by-standers catch sight of the yellow glint of gold, and listened with self-satisfied face to the chink of the coins as they slipped them through the narrow opening.

Among the others, one poor widow, with thread-bare dress and pinched face, came timidly forward. For a moment it might have been thought she came to beg; but it was not so. She, too, longed to make a gift to God at the glad Passover-time, but do what she could, she had only been able to gather two little copper coins, which together made a farthing. It hardly seemed worth while to give so little, yet it was all she had; and when it was gone, she did not know how to find bread for to-morrow. The two little coins jingled faintly as they fell, and she turned away with a sigh, to give place to those with large gifts who pressed up behind her, and looked with but half-hidden contempt on her poverty.

But the eyes of the Christ for whom she longed, but whom she did not recognise, had seen and understood. Calling His disciples to His side, He said: "Verily I say unto you, This poor widow cast

in more than all they which are casting into the treasury ; for they all cast in what they did not need ; but she of her want did cast in all that she had, even all her living."

I think the disciples wondered at this saying, for they had not yet learned that God judges our gifts not by the sum we give, but by what we keep for ourselves. The rich would not miss their gifts. Their houses would not be less comfortable, nor their food less rich ; but this woman had given her all. In God's scales her farthing outweighed all the gold.

Just then some men, who by their dress and speech were plainly Greek, entered the Court of the Gentiles, desiring to see Jesus. Between them and Him rose a beautifully-wrought railing, with tablets here and there, bearing the warning that no Gentile might venture within it on pain of death ; and though these Gentiles had given up their heathen religion and worshipped the true God, they were excluded from this inner court. So they sought out Philip, perhaps because he had a Greek name, and said, "Sir, we would see Jesus." Philip was not sure whether the Master should be troubled by these people. Possibly they were only

seeking to gratify curiosity, so he asked Andrew's advice. Then they both carried the message to Jesus.

No sooner had He heard who were inquiring for Him, than His worn face brightened, and He exclaimed, "The hour is come, that the Son of Man should be glorified." The coming of these Greeks was a token to Him that others besides Jews should seek Him. They were the first little stream — scarcely more than a thread — which would grow to a mighty river of people, flowing from all lands to His feet. His imagination leapt forward to the time when the greatest nations of the earth should own Him as Lord.

As the apostles listened, the hope which was so slow to give way before the truth, burst forth again, and they thought of Him as a warrior-king who should receive the highest honours in Jerusalem. But His next words showed them their mistake, for He said, "Except a corn of wheat fall into the earth and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit." He was thinking of His own death, which was to make Him the loadstone of all nations and more than conqueror over sin.

All through His life Jesus was fighting a battle

against Satan, who was called the Prince of this World. He could only free men from Satan's power by allowing him to do his worst, for not till then would the full horror and blackness of sin be shown. Satan had leashed together the chief priests and Pharisees like hounds to do his bidding, and their prey was to be no other than the Christ. But when His body had been broken, and they dreamed themselves victorious, His real triumph would begin. Through all the centuries to come, men and women would look aghast on the sin that had attempted to destroy perfect holiness, and the cross would be as a throne, from which the crucified Son of God would draw the love and obedience of many to Himself, and through Him to the Father.

Not till Satan had done his worst would men see his true vileness ; but as Jesus thought of the horror of the worst, He was oppressed, and cried in prayer : " Now is My soul troubled ; and what shall I say ? Father, save Me from this hour : but for this cause came I unto this hour. Father, glorify Thy name." Then came pealing from the sky a voice which said, " I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again."

The people started at the sudden sound, and thought it thundered. But some fancied they could catch one or two words, and whispered in awestruck tones, "An angel spake to Him." But Jesus said, "This voice came not because of Me, but for your sakes." He meant that the Divine voice was a token to the people that He really was the Christ.

Then His thoughts sped forth to the victory His death would gain. He saw the triumph of good beyond the dreadfulness of sin, and cried: "Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out. And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me." His disciples scarcely understood Him, for He was speaking of the cross on which He should be lifted up in death. The people did not understand Him at all.

And now the long weary day, the last Jesus would spend in the Temple, drew to a close; but before it ended He had one last message to give. Crowds still gathered round Him, though they felt more and more certain that He was no leader for them against the Romans. His disciples were at His side, and still haunting Him were the Pharisees

and Sadducees and chief priests, on whose faces hatred and the day's discomfiture had written ugly lines.

In the hearing of all, He spoke His final condemnation of His enemies. He had tried all means to win them, had answered their questions, had shown Himself full of love and patience, had sought to set them thinking by parables. But they had resisted Him, and wilfully misunderstood His words, and so had grown baser and baser. They had injured Him, and were seeking to destroy Him. Hatred had become their master-passion.

Now at last He tore away the veil of hypocrisy with which they had hidden the disease of their souls, and described them in words which stung and drew blood like a scourge. All their pretence of goodness He tore to shreds, their double-mindedness and pride He exposed, and cried, "Ye serpents, ye offspring of vipers, how shall ye escape the judgment of hell?"

The anger of One so full of forbearance and tenderness was an awful thing. It was not sudden passion, like a flame of fire, but the terrible white heat of the anger of God. It was the voice of

outraged love, and ended with a cry of most bitter sorrow : " O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not ! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate."

He ceased, and there was a silence as of death. He drew His disciples to His side, and passing swiftly through the crowd that gave way as before a king, He hastened along the glorious cloister and through the outer gate.

His final words to those blind hearts had been spoken : " Ye would not. Behold, your house is left unto you desolate." Ah, desolate indeed, when the Beloved Son, who was Love itself, sought a welcome in vain, and was driven from the door !

CHAPTER XXXIX

JESUS TELLS OF THE END OF THE WORLD

THE Temple was transfigured in the light of the setting sun as Jesus left it. The gates of gold and of brass shone resplendent in the slanting rays, and the pinnacles seemed turned to flame, while the pillars of precious marble glowed into gorgeous colour beneath the deepening tints of the sky. As the disciples crossed the valley, they saw the mighty foundations rising from its depths, built of blocks almost as high as a man, and many feet in length. The wonder of it filled them with admiration; their Master's terrible words concerning the coming downfall of Jerusalem seemed impossible, and they exclaimed: "Master, behold what manner of stones and what manner of buildings." "Seest thou these great buildings?" answered Jesus, "there shall not be left of them one stone

upon another, which shall not be thrown down." A chill fell upon the little company, and silently they climbed the slopes of Olivet.

As they sat on the crest of the hill, watching the superb city in the rich dimness of the lingering afterglow, and looking straight across the purple shadows of the valley to the Temple, a few of the disciples found courage to question Jesus. "Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign when these things are all about to be accomplished?"

The sense of coming calamity was strong in them, and they even began to believe that Jesus must die; yet His words had given them hope that He would reveal Himself at a later day.

Then Jesus began to unfold the future so far as they might know it. He told them first of the fall of Jerusalem, which would follow earthquakes and famines and all manner of disturbances, and warned them to fly to the mountains when the Temple was about to be defiled by the heathen. All this came true only forty years later, when the Romans laid in ruins the proud city that had dreamed of a world-wide empire. In that time of war a million Jews were slain, many were cast into

slavery, and the Temple was defiled with blood and fire.

He went on to speak of the end of the world, telling them that it could not come until the gospel had been preached to all nations. He could not tell them the day, for it was hidden from all men, from the angels, and even from Himself, and known only to the Father.

He drew a picture of Himself as master of a house who went away and left every servant his work, and commanded the porter to watch. His voice grew deep and earnest as He said: "Watch ye therefore: for ye know not when the master of the house cometh, at even, or at midnight, or at the cock-crowing, or in the morning: lest, coming suddenly, he find you sleeping. And what I say unto you, I say unto all, Watch."

He added yet another parable to warn them to guard against the sleep of the heart. It was a picture of those waiting for the coming of the bridegroom to receive his bride.

It is the custom in the East for marriages to take place at night. During the day the bride is taken to the house of the bridegroom, who is spending the time with some friend or relative,

and she is there clad in her bridal garments and ornaments. When all is done it is twilight, but there are still some hours before the bridegroom comes. The bridesmaids must remain, for they have yet a duty to perform. They must go forth with lamps to light the entrance and welcome him as he comes, the centre of a gay procession of friends, bearing torches which stream ribands of flame in the blackness of the night.

As the hours of waiting go slowly by, the women, tired with excitement, grow drowsy, and are only startled from sleep by the shouts of joy in the distance, warning them that the bridegroom approaches. Hastily they rise and take their lamps and go forth, and then joining the newcomers, return with them for the wedding feast. The door is shut, and sounds of revelry come from within. From this description you will understand the story Jesus told.

He likened Himself to the bridegroom, and His disciples to ten virgins who waited with the bride for His coming. They had plenty of time to make their preparations, but while He lingered they grew weary and slept. At midnight the cry was heard, "Behold, the bridegroom cometh."

Then all the maidens arose and trimmed their lamps. Now five of them were wise, and five were foolish. The foolish maidens had brought no oil, and the flame was low and ready to go out. They cried to their companions, "Give us of your oil ; for our lamps are going out." But the wise maidens answered : "Perhaps there will not be enough for you and for us. Go therefore to those that sell, and buy what you need."

Away they hurried, for every moment was precious ; but the shops were shut, and it took long to buy the oil. While they were away the procession came to the house ; the wise maidens with their brightly-burning lamps went forth to meet the bridegroom, and then entered with him for the wedding feast, and the door was shut. When the foolish maidens returned, all was dark—only the ends of burnt-out torches smouldered in the deserted street. The night-wind blew chill and they were alone, for the village had gone to rest.

From within they heard happy voices and gay laughter. They could not believe they would be shut out, and beating upon the door they cried, "Lord, open to us." But no one came to open to them. A voice answered from within, "Verily I

say unto you, I know you not." As these sad words fell on the ears of the disciples their faces blanched, and Jesus added once more, "Watch, for ye know not the day nor the hour."

The night had fallen and the moon was rising upon the city when Jesus gave the last warning of this crowded, eventful day. He spoke it for each of His disciples, but most of all for Judas. They had been asking Him about the end of the world; now He gave them a picture of the hour of judgment, and taught them once more that deeds not words, the humble not the proud, are precious in God's eyes.

There will be a throne of burning glory, surrounded by the holy angels, and Jesus Himself seated there as King. Before Him all the nations will be gathered, and as a shepherd parts the sheep from the goats when they reach the fold, so this Judge will divide the vast multitude, stretching as far as eye can reach, and some take their places on the right hand, the others on the left. Then the King shall say to those on the right hand: "Come, ye blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: for I was an hungred, and ye gave Me

meat : I was thirsty, and ye gave Me drink : I was a stranger, and ye sheltered Me : naked, and ye clothed Me : I was sick, and ye visited Me : I was in prison, and ye came unto Me.”

But the righteous know that they never saw this great King in sorrow or need, and cry, “Lord, when saw we Thee an hungred, or athirst, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and comforted Thee ?” and the King shall answer, “Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it unto one of these My brethren, even these least, ye did it unto Me.”

Then the fateful words will be spoken to those on the left hand : “Depart from Me, ye cursed, into the eternal fire which is prepared for the devil and his angels : for I was an hungred, and ye gave Me no meat : I was thirsty, and ye gave Me no drink : I was a stranger, and ye sheltered Me not : naked, and ye clothed Me not : sick, and in prison, and ye visited Me not.” They answer in angry defence, “Lord, when saw we Thee an hungred, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto Thee ?” Then shall the King answer, “Inasmuch as ye did it not unto one of these least, ye did it not unto Me.”

Then two great processions pass forth from before the throne: the righteous into everlasting life, where love and peace and joy are the flowers of every day; but the others into eternal punishment—the darkness which their own hearts make, the prison-house which their own selfishness has built.

The disciples were too awestricken to say one word. The throne of glory seemed before their eyes. Their Master seemed even now the King and Judge. Silently, and worn in mind and heart, they took their way to Bethany. But one heart was steeled against all warnings, one mind was busy with base plans, even while the eyes of the Judge were upon him. Judas had determined to play the traitor, and flinched not.

CHAPTER XL

HOW JUDAS FELL

JESUS spent Thursday very quietly in the house of his friends in Bethany. We can imagine Him sitting under the shade of a fig-tree in the little white courtyard, His apostles about Him, and by His side Lazarus, with unfathomable eyes that had beheld God's secret. Mary was sitting at her Master's feet, and Martha was perhaps for once unoccupied—all thoughts of feasting and household cares driven from her mind. How peaceful it was, after the war of tongues and the bitter hatred of the last days!

Yet a shadow of great anxiety lay black upon His friends. After those words of fire, spoken against the priests and Pharisees in the Temple court, His life could not long be safe. This was but the stillness before the storm, which in its

breaking must sweep away the joy of their lives. There was but one restless soul among them. Judas could not be still, for he was full of traitorous thoughts. We cannot tell exactly when he had done the evil thing; but the thought he had nursed so long in secret had taken definite shape, and he had consented to betray his Master.

Through all these three years he had never been rebuked by Jesus. He seemed one of the most blameless of the apostles. He did not make mistakes, like Peter with his hasty tongue, or James with his fiery temper, or Philip with his slow, calculating mind. He was so reliable and economical that he had been chosen to keep the scanty store of money, although he was not from Galilee like the rest. He was perhaps rather silent, and when he spoke he did not commit himself. He went like the others to preach when Jesus sent them forth, but I think he preached the glories of the kingdom rather than the beauty of holiness and the way of love.

You must not think that Judas meant to be a false disciple when He obeyed Jesus' call. He, too, gave up everything to follow his Master. He could not help admiring Jesus, and meant to be

sincere, but he had never cast out of his heart worldly ambition and the love of money. He was perfectly willing to share the hardships of the wandering life, and to share them patiently, if he might gain the kingdom of heaven of his hopes—an earthly kingdom, where his place should be near the throne.

It was when that vision began to fade that his enthusiasm died too. He lost all his admiration for a master who seemed ignorant of the value of money and of worldly place. Even his outward show of patience vanished when he saw Mary of Bethany pour the costly ointment over Jesus' feet, unrebuked. Then he was seized with the despair of a self-seeking soul. Surely he who had meant to make a great success of his life had shown himself but a fool after all. The bright ideals that had caught his imagination were but leading him into a quagmire of hopeless poverty, and at last he had made up his mind to forsake his Master.

But what was to be done? He might go back to Kerioth (the town from which he took his name Iscariot), but then he had given up everything to follow this leader. How his fellow-townsmen would sneer! A dreadful plan came into his

mind. He would go to the chief priests, who had plainly shown their hatred of Jesus, and get money from them for delivering Him into their hands. He did not stop to think how these men would treat Jesus. He only thought of the reward ; and at last the silver pieces seemed to shine before his eyes, and his unsatisfied love of money, which of late had led him to take even from the common purse, grew as fierce as a hungry wolf. After all, he would still make something out of this great mistake of his life.

The chief priests were sitting in council, discussing how they could take Jesus without causing an uproar, when a message came that a man asked admittance on a matter of great import. Their eyes brightened when Judas dropped the cloak that half-hid his face, and they recognised one of the followers of the very man they were planning to capture. But they were cold-blooded and cunning. They saw that this man was in their power, for he was both greedy and frightened. So they drove a hard bargain with him. Thirty pieces of silver, just the price of a slave, less than five pounds in our money, was what Judas received for betraying the Son of Man.

Eagerly they discussed the time and place. It must not be in the day, for they still seemed to hear the shouts of joy with which Jesus had been welcomed to Jerusalem; it must be at night and in a quiet spot. Then Judas hurried back to Bethany, and took his place again among the apostles as though he, too, would follow to the end. But the Christ was not deceived. A ready word and smile were no cloak to His eyes. Yet Judas was to have one more chance of repentance.

A little later Jesus said to Peter and John, "Go, prepare the Passover that we may eat"; and they asked, "Where wilt Thou that we prepare?" How intently Judas would listen for the answer, for surely this was the opportunity he sought. But he learnt nothing, for Jesus meant at least to have this last feast with His disciples undisturbed by any treachery. "Go into the city," He bade them, "and when you have entered, you will see a man bearing a pitcher of water. Follow him, and say to his master, 'The Teacher saith, "Where is the guest-chamber, where I shall eat the Passover with My disciples?"'" And he will show you a large upper room all prepared; there make ready."

Everything had been arranged by Jesus so that

no place or person should be named before the traitor. A man carrying water would be easily noticed, for this was always the work of women.

So Peter and John went up to Jerusalem to do the Master's bidding. And they bought the unblemished lamb, and had it slain before the priests, and then carried it to the house to be roasted. Next they prepared the unleavened bread, which might be made of wheat, barley, or rye, but must be mixed only with water. And having bought the bitter herbs and other things required, they returned to their Master. And all the time, Judas, the willing servant of the devil, sat by the side of the Son of God.

You ask, But why was Judas allowed to remain among the twelve after the blackness of his heart was plain to Jesus? That is a hard question to answer, but I think the great love of Jesus would not allow Him to leave one stone unturned if by any means He might deliver Judas from the mastery of sin. And there was a deeper reason: God's Son had come to confess the sins of His fellow-men to His Father, and He could only confess sin when He had felt it in all its horror.

Up to this time, Jesus had been wounded and

wearied by many sins—sins of hatred, and sins of selfishness, and sins of ugly passion—but He had never suffered from treachery. Until this blackest of sins was added to the heavy load His heart of love already bore, He could not make a perfect confession and become a complete sacrifice for the sinners for whom He was to die. So He bore with Judas, and looked into the hell that was in the false apostle's heart, because of His great love for those He came to save.

CHAPTER XLI

WHAT JESUS DID IN THE UPPER ROOM

It was late in the afternoon when Jesus said a sad good-bye to His friends in Bethany and led His disciples out towards Jerusalem. They took the familiar road that wound over the hill of Olivet, and soon entered the crowded streets. Some people were coming in from the tents that studded the turf or gleamed amidst the dark foliage of the trees; others were descending the Temple mount with the sacrificial lamb upon their shoulders; and many were hurrying to the appointed place where they were to keep the feast with their neighbours and families. The rule was, that no more than twenty and not fewer than ten should gather round each Pass-over lamb.

Threading His way through the throng, Jesus

reached the house where a friend unknown to us had lent Him a room, and led His disciples into its silence. It was only an ordinary upper chamber, though of unusual size, but it is more sacred to us in thought than the most stately cathedral.

Everything was ready. There by the doorway, where the disciples removed their sandals, stood the large jug of water and the basin, that their feet, scorched by the sun and covered with dust, might be washed. On the table was the roasted lamb, and dishes containing the unleavened bread, the lettuce and other herbs, and the "charoseth," made of raisins and dates soaked in vinegar. Some larger cups were there also, and pitchers of red wine and of water. Round about were low couches; for the disciples would eat the Passover reclining, with their feet stretched out behind them, and the left elbow on the table.

Soon they had taken their places. Jesus was in the centre, and on His right John, the disciple whom He loved, and near him Peter. Judas sat on Jesus' left, either because he was treasurer, or because he had pushed himself into that place in his eagerness to pretend that he was as faithful

as the rest. All were ready ; but Jesus could not speak His most tender words of comfort and hope, and could not teach His friends what to do to keep Him in remembrance, while angry feelings were in their minds.

It was quite plain that they were angry with one another, for no one rose to take the basin and jug to wash the others' feet. This was generally a slave's work, but they had been accustomed to do it for one another. To-day they sat sullenly ; for on the way to Jerusalem they had been discussing the old, tiresome question which would be the greatest in the "kingdom," and each was afraid he would be lowering his dignity in doing the work of a slave for his brother.

Jesus read the story of their pitiable pride, and rose from His seat without a word. They all watched Him wonderingly as He laid aside His upper cloak, and fastened the towel round His waist, just as a slave would, and then filled the basin with water. But when He stooped to wash the feet of the disciple at the end of the table all were covered with shame. Their Master whose hands had wrought such wonders

was doing a slave's work. All their mean pride died away, and they understood the rebuke. As He touched their feet and cleansed them, their hearts, too, were purified from envy and anger.

When it was Judas' turn he made no objection. Indeed I think he was swift to loosen his sandals, and was untouched by the act of humility and love. But when Jesus came to Peter, this apostle started from his place, exclaiming, "Lord, dost thou really mean to wash my feet!" Jesus answered, "What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter." "Lord," cried Peter, wilful as ever, "thou shalt never wash my feet." Jesus answered him very solemnly, "If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with Me." When Peter understood that he could not be the friend and companion of his Master unless he obeyed, he leapt to the other extreme, saying, "Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head." It was a characteristic saying; he was so warm hearted, and yet so slow to learn to leave things in his Master's hands.

Jesus said, "He that is bathed needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit: and ye are clean, but not all." He meant that

just as a man who had bathed was quite clean if he washed but his feet after a walk, for the feet only would be soiled, so the disciples only needed cleansing from this latest and particular sin. Their hearts were really right, for they trusted Him and followed Him, and had shown themselves lovers of Him and of one another. He did not think them altogether evil because envy and pride had soiled their souls, but the stain of sin must be washed away.

The lesson had been taught; but when Jesus had put on His cloak again and resumed His place at the table, He bade them consider what they had done. They called Him "Master and Lord," but He had washed their feet, and He said, "I have given you an example, that ye also should do as I have done to you." Thus He taught us to be ready to serve one another. If He who came forth from God, and was about to return to God, did the work of a slave, is there any deed too humble for us to do?

Still Jesus could not say His last words of counsel while Judas with his false smile sat among them. He had said, "Ye are not all clean," but Judas remained unmoved. So He spoke more



Pyre & Spalding.

JESUS WASHING THE DISCIPLES' FEET.

From the Picture by Ford Madox Brown in the Tate Gallery, London.

plainly, saying, "One of you will betray Me." When the disciples heard this, they were much distressed. They looked doubtfully, each man at his neighbour, and then knowing their own weakness, they cried, "Lord, is it I? Is it I?" Jesus answered, "He that dippeth his hand with Me in the dish, the same shall betray Me." There were several dishes on the table, and only those who sat near Him could dip the unleavened bread in the same dish of "charoseth" as He used. The suspense grew worse, and Peter beckoned to John to ask Jesus who would be the betrayer. He dreaded to say "Who is it?" yet he was eager to know.

John had only to lean his head back, and could whisper a question to his Master. Jesus answered, "He it is to whom I give a sop when I have dipped it." No other heard His words. If the Master had pointed out Judas as the betrayer, the disciples would have slain him on the spot, for some of them carried swords. But John could be trusted. He would not act without his Master's bidding.

Jesus then took some of the thin bread and placed some bitter herbs within it, and dipped it in the sauce, and handed it to Judas. The traitor had

begun to tremble, but still tried to look like a true friend. Now he, too, murmured, "Is it I?" Jesus answered, "You know it is. That thou doest, do quickly."

The others at the table heard only the last words, and thought He was sending the treasurer to buy something that had been forgotten. Judas knew better. He knew now that his Master saw the dark purpose of his heart and yet spared him. But he was still hard as stone. He rose swiftly from his seat and stole to the door, and as the disciples looked up, they saw that darkness had fallen. But blacker than the blackness of an Eastern night was the heart of Judas, who had shut the door against the Light of the World. Clinging hands of love had striven to hold it open, but now it was fast barred against joy and peace as well as against love.

At last Jesus could teach His disciples what He would have them do to keep Him and His death always in remembrance. When the lamps had been lighted, and the disciples had begun the feast, Jesus took up one of the unleavened cakes and blessed it by giving thanks to the Father, and then spoke words full of mystery to His friends.

“This is My body, which is given for you : this do in remembrance of Me.” And the bread was passed from hand to hand, each one eating of it. When they had finished, Jesus took a cup of wine and gave thanks, and again spoke mysterious words which they only partly understood, for He said, “This cup is the new covenant in My blood, which is shed for you.” Then the cup, too, passed from hand to hand, and each one drank in silence.

Supposing we did not understand the meaning of the feast we ought to observe it, for He asked His friends thus to keep Him and His death in loving memory. But even a child can understand a little of what Jesus intended to teach His disciples.

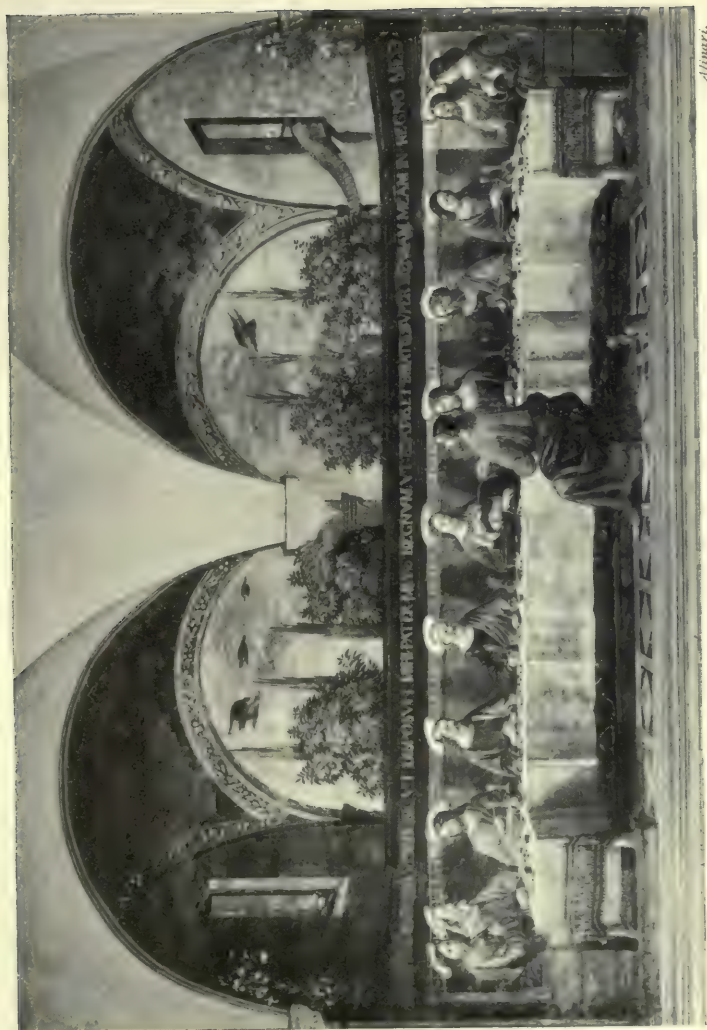
It was as though He painted two pictures to show what His death would accomplish for the world. When He said of the bread, “This is My body,” He did not mean that the bread had become flesh, but that it was a symbol of His body which was to be broken on the cross. And just as bread will not feed us unless it be broken and eaten, so His Spirit would not have the power truly to help all men until His body had been broken, and He had died for their sake.

His disciples had always thought that if He

died it would be against His will, but now He taught them that He was willing to die that they might know the perfect love of the Father, and that they might see sin truly. Therefore, whenever we take the broken bread in our hands, we remind ourselves of the unspeakable love which did not shrink from the last agony.

In the same way, when He took the cup of wine and said, "This is the new covenant in My blood," He did not mean that the wine was changed into blood, but it was a picture of the laying down of His life. As soon as the disciples heard the word "new covenant," they would at once think of what had happened so many hundred years before at Mount Sinai, when God made a covenant or agreement, with the people of Israel. They were to be His people and He was to be their God, and would forgive them when they sacrificed to Him in token of repentance of sin. To seal this covenant, Moses slew beasts in sacrifice, and took blood and sprinkled the people.

Now Jesus taught that there was to be a new covenant between God and all those who trusted in the Beloved Son. When His blood was shed, it was to take away the sins of men. Of course it



THE LAST SUPPER.

From the Picture by Ghirlandajo in the Museo di San Marco, Florence.

was not the death of an animal which made the Israelites clean from sin. That was only a sign that their lives were due to God because of their sin. But when Jesus died, men beheld the sacrifice of a perfect will and a perfect life, and no sacrifices of sheep or oxen have been needed since. Now all who come to God with humble and contrite hearts, asking forgiveness in the name of the Christ, are pardoned and blessed, and their sin is taken away as mist before the sun. For this reason we call Jesus our Saviour.

You may not be able to understand all He meant to teach, but this you can remember: He founded what we call the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, that we may ever keep in memory the death He died for love of us, and that in the keeping of it He may in a special sense visit our souls.

During the rest of the evening, Jesus talked very tenderly with His disciples and sought to prepare them for the final parting, just as a mother seeks to comfort her little children when she has to go upon a long journey and leave them behind. The disciples felt drawn very close to Him, and told Him many things they could not understand.

When He said, "Little children, yet a little while I am with you; and whither I go ye cannot come," Peter said, "Lord, why cannot I follow Thee now?" In his self-confidence he felt almost as though Jesus were doubting his loyalty, and boastfully exclaimed, "I will lay down my life for Thy sake." Jesus knew the weakness of this loving friend, and longed to heal him of his boastfulness. He looked with sad eyes on Peter, and said, "Wilt thou lay down thy life for My sake? Verily, verily, the cock shall not crow, till thou hast denied Me thrice."

Peter fell into silence, but other disciples spoke. Jesus tried to cheer them by telling them that He was going to the Father's house—a new and beautiful name for heaven—and that He would prepare the way for them to come too. But Thomas said despondently, "We know not whither Thou goest; and how can we know the way?" Jesus answered that He was the way thither, and that men could only reach the Father through Him.

"Lord," said Philip, "show us the Father, and that is all we ask." Jesus was grieved that Philip did not yet understand that the Father was just



Anderson.

JESUS AND PHILIP.

From the Picture by Bonifazio 2 in the Academy, Venice.

like Himself in truth and holiness and love, and that He and the Father were as much one as the sun and the sunshine. He answered, "Have I been so long time with you, and yet have you not known Me, Philip?" He could not have said more plainly that He was God, though speaking as a man, and with hands yet bearing the marks of His work as a carpenter. He went on to tell them that He would send One called the Comforter to fill His place, who should abide in their hearts and be their champion, adding: "Wherever the Comforter is, there I am also; I shall be with you, and in you, though unseen. Show your love to Me by obeying My words, and I shall make Myself plain to you." Another disciple asked, "How shall we see you without other men seeing you?" and Jesus told them that love and obedience should give them new eyes, and all they could not understand the Comforter should teach them.

With such sweet words He comforted His sorrow-stricken comrades. Then they sang the Passover hymn, which is taken from the Book of Psalms. They now made ready to go. But while they were getting their sandals, and still lingered, He spoke again to them, and at last stood

and prayed to the Father for Himself and for them. You will read this prayer when you are older, and will know that it is like gazing into heaven to hear Jesus speaking with His Father. But it was time to hurry forth. Judas might at any moment return with a band of soldiers to take Jesus, and He wished to prepare Himself for the terrible hours of agony before His death.

So they left the upper room and passed through the silent streets and out of the city, and crossing the little brook Kedron they came to an olive garden, and rested beneath the moon-pierced trees.

CHAPTER XLII

HOW JESUS WAS BETRAYED AND DENIED

THE olive garden of Gethsemane into which Jesus led His disciples belonged to a friend who had given Him freedom to use it as His own. He had often rested beneath the low olive-trees, and sometimes, it would seem, had spent the night there. It was a familiar and friendly place, and was private even when the moon was full, as on that night, for the grey leaves and twisted branches made dark shadows on the grass. It was a very sad and silent company that entered the garden, and the saddest of all was Jesus.

He had been calm and unshaken when His friends were dismayed and ready to weep, but now He walked as one heart-broken, weighed down with an awful sorrow. Immediately He led apart Peter and James and John into the deeper recesses

of the grove. As a mother hides her tears from her little children, but longs for the sympathy of those who are older, so Jesus hid His agony from the eight disciples who were weakest, and sought comfort only in the presence of those who understood Him best. He said to them, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death: tarry ye here, and watch with Me." He could not endure that even John should see the whole of His suffering, and going on a stone's throw, fell on His face upon the mossy ground and prayed a short and broken prayer: "O My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from Me: nevertheless, not as I will but as Thou wilt." And as He lay there, His anguish was so great that sweat mingled with blood broke out upon His body. It was as though He were toiling up a precipice and every moment was near to fall. His very soul shuddered at the thought of the horror that was to be.

As we look on and marvel we must ask ourselves, Why was the agony so terrible? Why was the Christ, who had shown an heroic and unshrinking front to all His enemies, thus stretched upon the ground as though all strength had ebbed away? What did this prayer mean?

Was death the cup from which He entreated to be delivered ?

No ; He was not afraid of death, for He knew it to be but an event in the human life which is begun here and is fuller in the City of God, to which God's children go. And for the Son of God the life of the spirit had neither beginning nor end.

Neither was He afraid of torture, for He was the truest Hero that ever trod our earth.

Nor was He weighed down by the bitterness of parting from those He loved, for that would be for only a little while.

But He saw that when men murdered Him, they would fall into the blackest sin—sin against perfect Love. He was surrounded by sin. It defiled the hearts of the priests of the righteous God, it had consumed the heart of Judas His comrade, and was fastening upon the very people among whom He had healed and taught. Satan, the Prince of this World, the Prince of Hypocrites, the Prince of Murderers, had risen for the moment to his fullest power. As the perfectly loving and perfectly pure Son of God read the full horror and meaning of evil, it was as if He were choking in a sea of filth and fire. He be-

sought the Father to find some other way whereby the sins of men might be perfectly confessed, and taken away. In a little while He rose, and staggering to His feet He came to His three disciples. But they were not watching with Him. They were asleep, lying in uneasy postures, for they had not meant to slumber. Jesus wakened them, and said to Peter, who had boasted that he would die with His Master, "What! could ye not watch with Me one hour?" But even in the depths of His own sorrow He was pitiful. He did not rebuke His neglectful followers, but seeing their shamed and wearied faces as they suddenly awoke, He added, "Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak."

There was no help for Him in man. He turned away and prayed again, "O my Father, if this cup may not pass from Me, except I drink it, Thy will be done." Jesus saw clearly that there was only one way in which the hatefulness of sin could be unmasked to all men living and to come. He was adjusting His will to the will of the Father. But the great longing for human sympathy drew Him once more to the three.

They were asleep again: their eyes were pressed down as by invisible hands, for they had not learnt to conquer the body by the spirit. Jesus had to pass through His agony alone. The trees and the angels and the Father watched over Him. He fell on His face in prayer, saying the same words, "O My Father . . . Thy will be done"; and at last the awful burden of His heart was lightened. He knew it was His Father's will that men's sins should nail Him to the cross, and He was content to suffer it. An angel stood beneath the olive-trees and ministered to Him, and peace came upon His soul as a brooding dove covers her young with soft wings outstretched. He rose, master of His destiny, a hero in men's eyes as He had always been a hero in His heart. He was ready for the worst that men could do.

Into the woods my Master went,
Clean forspent, forspent.
Into the woods my Master came,
Forspent with love and shame.
But the olives they were not blind to Him,
The little grey leaves were kind to Him,
The thorn-bush had a mind to Him,
When into the woods He came.

Out of the woods my Master went,
And He was well content.
Out of the woods my Master came,
Content with death and shame.
When death and shame would woo Him last,
From under the trees they drew Him last;
'Twas on a tree they slew Him last,
When out of the woods He came.¹

When Jesus came back to His disciples with a look of unspeakable peace upon His worn face, He bent over them and said, "Sleep on now, and take your rest."

Just at that moment the trampling of many feet was heard in the still night; lanterns gleamed through the dusky foliage; and the clang of arms roused the sleepers. Jesus spoke again, and in a different tone, summoning His comrades to be firm:

"Rise," He said, "let us be going: behold, he is at hand that doth betray Me."

It was Judas with a great company of the Temple guard, armed with bludgeons, and of Roman soldiers with their swords; for he seems to have feared that Jesus would resist, and perhaps work some miracle.

¹ Sydney Lanier.

Judas was dead to all sense of treachery now, and had said to the leaders, with a poor sort of cunning, "Whomsoever I shall kiss, that same is He; hold Him fast."

A kiss was the ordinary greeting between men who were friends, the sign of good faith and love. But this kiss that was pressed upon the cheek of the Christ by the betrayer was like the wound of a serpent's fang. "Hail, Master," cried Judas, and Jesus asked, "Friend, wherefore art thou come?" "Friend"! That word should have pierced the hardest heart. For three years Judas had been the close friend of His Master, sharing His cup, His bed and His love. For a moment even he was staggered and stood silent.

Jesus came forward and asked, "Whom seek ye?" The answer came, "Jesus of Nazareth." Then said Jesus, "I am He." As He uttered these words, soldiers and servants alike fell back, and some stumbled to the ground. Such unearthly majesty was in His face and person, that for a moment one of the dead kings of Israel seemed to stand before them. From what Judas had said, they had half-expected a brawling, dangerous fighter. This august Figure filled with fear even

the Roman soldiers, who had cast themselves upon their enemies' spears without a thought.

It was Jesus who called them back to their task by asking again, "Whom seek ye?" They said, "Jesus of Nazareth." Then answered Jesus, "I have told you already I am He. If therefore ye seek Me, let these go their way." Already some were stretching out their hands against the disciples, and Jesus, as always, cared for His own. In His life and death He stepped forth to take upon Himself the responsibility and to shield His friends from the worst disasters.

Although the Master stood so quietly, the High Priest's servants began to bind His hands, while the soldiers stood by, surely half-ashamed of their night's work, feeling that this was not an errand for warriors. Just then Peter, half in fear and half in anger, drew his sword and struck at one of the servants, whose name we know was Malchus. The man had just time to stoop his head, but he could not altogether avoid the blow, and his ear fell upon the ground. Jesus said, "Let Me do this one thing," and, freeing His hands, with one touch healed the wound. They were binding the hands of unbounded love and power.

Then turning to Peter, He rebuked him for his folly, saying: "Put up thy sword into its place: for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword. Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to My Father, and He shall immediately give to Me twelve regiments of angels? But how then shall the Scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be?" Peter did not yet understand that Jesus was giving His life, although base men were taking it from Him. It had not entered his mind that Jesus was fulfilling ancient prophecies, and doing the Great Deliverer's work just by giving up His life.

But while Jesus rebuked His disciples, He also showed His captors how mean their behaviour was. He said, "Are ye come out as against a thief, with swords and clubs, for to take Me? When I was daily with you in the Temple, ye stretched forth no hands against Me." I think some must have dropped their weapons and hung back in disgust at themselves at these words. Certainly when the terror-stricken disciples turned and fled, realising that their Master meant to give Himself up, no hand was raised to stay their flight.

So the great band of armed men led away their

captive through the moonlight. But He had showed Himself their King, for they had fallen at His feet ; and their Helper, for He had healed their only wound ; and the Lover of His comrades, for He had gained them freedom. Jesus was as supremely great in His bonds as when the admiring multitudes surrounded Him on the wind-swept hills of Galilee, or the baffled priests and Pharisees shrank before His wisdom and purity like beaten curs.

The captain of the force hurried Jesus to the palace of the High Priest. It was a large building built round a four-sided court, which was open to the sky. The halls which opened on to this court were not walled in on that side, but only separated from it by pillars, so that those within could see what passed in the courtyard. As the band of men poured through the archway under the front of the house, John, who had friends in the High Priest's family, entered with them, and the door was shut.

But John had seen Peter standing in the shadows near the door, and came to the maid who was acting as porter, and asked her to admit his friend. The maid, knowing that John was a friend of Jesus, jumped to the conclusion that Peter belonged to the

same company, and said, "Art not thou also one of this man's disciples?" This was the moment of Peter's trial. He was taken by surprise, and knowing that he had wounded one of the servants of this very household, and was in danger of his life, answered in a moment, "I am not." It was a lie—a lie told to a woman—a cowardly lie; but it was not the worst lie he told.

The servants had lit a fire in the centre of the pavement, and as the night was chilly, Peter advanced out of the shadows to warm himself. His heart must have been uplifted again. Perhaps he was saying to himself, "I alone of my comrades have dared to follow my Master," for John had vanished from sight. Then he began to talk recklessly to the soldiers and servants standing round, until one of them detected his rough Galilæan accent, and said, "You need not deny that you are one of this man's disciples, for your speech betrays you." Peter again answered, "I am not," and with a volley of oaths tried to show that he had no connection with that Teacher of purity.

Just then the flames lit up his face, and one who was a kinsman of Malchus, whom Peter had wounded in the garden, declared that he could not

be mistaken—he had seen this man with Jesus that very night. Peter denied his Lord again, more violently than ever.

Just then the darkness broke a little; the glimmering of dawn was in the sky; and a cock, kept by some Roman soldier, gave its first crow. Jesus, who had been examined by the High Priest, had heard Peter's loud oaths, and in that moment turned and looked upon him. A world of pity and sorrow and rebuke was in that look. The oath died from Peter's tongue. His Master's warning sounded in his ears again, and all the baseness of his cowardice, his lies, and his profanity was clear to him. He turned hastily from the group, and rushed to the door, weeping as if his tears could never cease again.

Ah, Peter, thou who hadst boasted that thou wouldst die for thy Lord, and didst sleep through His agony, how couldst thou add this new sorrow to His over-burdened heart?

CHAPTER XLIII

HOW JESUS WAS JUDGED BY THE JEWS

THOUGH the chief priests and the Pharisees had determined to get rid of Jesus at any cost, they did not wish to do so without some show of being in the right.

Even to themselves they kept up the pretence that they only wished to punish a blasphemer and to put an end to this danger to the nation. They felt it to be very important that the people should believe that the Jewish laws were being carefully obeyed.

While Peter in a frenzy of fear was denying the Lord, for whom he had declared himself willing to lay down his life, Jesus was led before Annas, an old man who had once been High Priest, but who, because he had offended the Romans, had been compelled to give up office. The Jewish people still looked upon him as High Priest, and vener-

ated him even more than his son-in-law, Caiaphas, who now filled his place. On his face were drawn lines of care and anxiety, and his crafty eyes were restless and dissatisfied.

Caiaphas, he knew, was scouring Jerusalem for witnesses against the Carpenter of Nazareth, and not only must an offence against Israel be proved, but, if possible, an offence against the Roman Government too ; for the Jews were forbidden by their rulers to punish by death, and such a sentence could only be pronounced by Pontius Pilate, the Governor of Judæa, who at that time was in Jerusalem, to see that no disturbances arose during the Passover.

Before the witnesses came, Annas was trying to tempt his prisoner to say something which might lead to His condemnation. But no questioning could draw a word in response. Jesus knew that no man could be condemned except by the public evidence of witnesses, and saw the trap that was laid for Him. One thing only He declared, and it was this : "I have spoken openly in the world, in the synagogues, and in the Temple, where all the Jews gather. Why askest thou Me ? Ask those who heard Me."

When one of the officers standing by heard these words, he smote Him across the face, saying, "Answerest Thou the High Priest so?"

It was but the first insult in the long tale of insults of that day. It was a coward's blow, dealt to One whose hands were bound, and who but asked that justice should be done.

"If I have spoken evil," said Jesus, with unflinching calm, "bear witness of the evil; but if well, why smitest thou Me?"

Annas drew back, seeing that he but wasted time, and then hearing that at last the council was gathered together, he commanded that Jesus should be led to the hall on the other side of the court, and there undergo a public trial.

Now this trial by which Jesus was to be condemned was but a pretence, for in three ways it broke the law. First, no man might be tried for his life at night, and dawn had not yet broken upon the city; secondly, it was forbidden to cross-examine an accused man; and, thirdly, no witnesses must be sought out.

Many had been found ready to give evidence, but this evidence was plainly insufficient, for no two agreed together. At length two came forward

who remembered having heard Jesus say that if the Temple were destroyed He could raise it again in three days. He had spoken these words of the temple of His body, but none had stayed to inquire what He meant. Even on this point the two witnesses did not agree, as required by the Jewish law.

All the while the Christ stood in utter silence, never interrupting, never answering. He well knew the falseness of the trial, and would take no part in it. Then the council grew angry and excited, and a dozen voices cried, "If Thou art the Christ, tell us." No man could be condemned out of his own mouth, but law and justice were both forgotten. At last Jesus opened His lips, "If I tell you," He said, "ye will not believe: and if I question, ye will not answer Me."

At this the outcries grew fiercer, and the tumult of voices only sank to silence as Caiaphas rose from his seat in the centre of the semicircle of judges, and solemnly said, "I adjure Thee by the living God, that Thou tell us whether Thou be the Christ, the Son of God."

Jesus knew His judges to be no better than His murderers, but at least they should know whom they sought to destroy.

Clearly and certainly the answer came, "I am the Christ, the Son of God. Hereafter ye shall see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven."

The word was uttered. This man whose face was marked by a brutal blow, and who was worn with agony and weariness, had declared Himself the very Son of God. They should have fallen at His feet. But Caiaphas had but one thought and one desire. In triumph he cried out, "He hath spoken blasphemy"; and according to the Jewish ordinance he rent his robe to the very hem. "Now ye have heard His blasphemy," he said. "What think ye?" And they shouted, "He is a man of death." Jesus stood condemned. It was a just judgment on any man who claimed to be the Son of God, *unless he spoke the truth*. That was the one thing the council had refused to consider, the one possibility they would not admit.

Thus they condemned to death the Father's Beloved, God's second self, the true Messiah; and in that hour condemned themselves in the eyes of all men and of the angels.

Then the soldiers of the priests' guard wrought their will on the holy body of Jesus. Some spat

in His pure and loving face ; some held His eyes closed, and cried, "Prophecy who smote Thee?" while they buffeted Him till the hall rang with their blows ; some mocked Him as if He were a witless dreamer. And all the time He spoke no word of rebuke—that had been useless—nor of scorn, for He pitied their dark hearts.

At last, when the whole Sanhedrin had met and determined how to approach Pilate, and had perhaps confirmed the hasty sentence of the dawn, Jesus was brought forth. His hands were bound with chains ; His clothes dishevelled and torn. He was pale with hunger and thirst and weariness. The foul spittle of the brutal soldiers was on His cheek ; dark marks told where their heavy fists had fallen.

Ah, how God must have loved us to send His Beloved Son to suffer such shame !

CHAPTER XLIV

HOW JESUS WAS CONDEMNED TO DEATH

PILATE had scarcely risen that morning when he was told that the Jewish councillors were at the gate of the palace with a prisoner in chains. They would not enter, lest they should become unclean by touching something containing leaven, and be prevented from joining in the Passover services; so he went out to them, and said, "What accusation bring ye against this man?" They were unwilling to answer, for they knew perfectly well that it was nothing to Pilate if Jesus called Himself the Son of their God. Accordingly they said, half-sulkily, "If this man were not an evildoer, we should not have delivered Him up unto thee."

Pilate was not willing to be troubled, and said, "Take him yourselves, and judge him according

to your law." The Jews answered, "It is not lawful for us to put any man to death"; and seeing how unwilling Pilate was to act, they poured out a succession of charges which they thought most likely to alarm him. "This man misleads the nation, and forbids tribute to Cæsar, and says that He is the Messiah and a king." Two lies and one half-truth, but the Pharisees were reckless now. When Pilate heard these words "to death" and a "king," he saw that this was a more serious affair than he had thought, and making a sign to his soldiers, they led Jesus inside the palace. The Pharisees, not afraid to lie, but afraid to touch any stray piece of leaven in the Gentile chamber, stayed without.

The Roman governor studied for a moment this prisoner who stood in so sore a plight, and then said to Him, half-contemptuously, "Art Thou the King of the Jews?" Then Jesus explained that He was a king indeed, but that His kingdom was not of this world, but a kingdom of truth. Bound and humbled as He was, His true majesty shone out when He said: "To this end have I been born, and for this cause am I come into the world, that I should bear

witness to the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth My voice." It was an appeal to Pilate to inquire and find out what the message of this high-souled captive was. But to him the words only opened a way of escape from burdensome business. Truth! He had nothing to do with truth. That was quite an unpractical question. So saying, "What is truth?" he passed through the gateway, and said to the Pharisees, "I find no crime in this man."

Why then did he not at once command that the prisoner should be set free? Perhaps the words were on his lips, but the angry outcry of the Jews checked him. Evidently he must offend them if he let this man go. They were dogs in his eyes; but they might get the ear of Cæsar; and of some of his past doings, Cæsar must never hear. No; he dare not release this man. Just then he heard the Jews say, "Beginning from *Galilee* this man stirreth up the people." Here was an escape from the difficulty. A Galilæan! Then Herod of Galilee must be the judge. Immediately Jesus was led to the palace in which Herod was staying, for he, too, had been drawn to Jerusalem by the Passover festivities.

When Herod heard who the prisoner was that waited in his courtyard, he was beyond measure glad. At last he could look on this famous Galilæan, whom he had once thought to be John the Baptist risen from the dead. In the bright sunlight he laughed at his sickly fancy, and commanded Jesus to be brought to him. At the same time, as he wished above all things to see some wonder wrought by this carpenter, one or two sick folk were hastily gathered at the foot of his throne. But Jesus would do no miracle to please a monarch's idle curiosity; and before his flood of questions, He remained as silent as the dumb. The chief priests and scribes, who had never lost sight of their prey, clamorously accused Him, but without extorting one reply.

Herod could not understand such noble self-restraint and quiet dignity. Was this dumb dog, who had not a word to say for Himself, the much-talked-of Jesus! He would not make sport for them; then they would make sport of Him. Jeering, they cast a gaudy robe upon His shoulders, and with scorn and wicked laughter sent Him back to Pilate.

Then the Governor heard the volley of accusations renewed. He saw more clearly that the councillors envied Jesus' influence, and wished for their own ends to put Him out of the way. But he dare not now declare Him innocent and defy His accusers. Things had gone too far. So he tried in three different ways to release Jesus, but each time he was baffled; the Jews were as wily as he.

First, he had just been reminded by some of the crowd that it was the custom to set free a prisoner of their choice at the Passover. He eagerly grasped the opportunity, and said, "Will ye that I release unto you the King of the Jews?" Some in the crowd wavered, but the councillors swiftly passed thither, saying, "Nay, not this deceiver, but Barabbas; that fine fellow Barabbas." Now Barabbas had done that of which Jesus was falsely accused. He had taken part in an insurrection; and more, he was a robber and an accomplice of murderers. But, urged on by the priests, some of the people cried, "Barabbas, Barabbas." Pilate saw that he must give them their choice, and said, "Which of the two shall I release unto you?" Then the crowd bellowed as with one voice,

“Barabbas.” The rebel and murderer and robber was released, while the pure and loving and healing Christ was left in bonds.

Just then a servant plucked Pilate’s robe, and a private message from his wife was whispered in his ear, “Have thou nothing to do with that righteous man; for I have suffered many things concerning Him.” She had seen this noble-looking workman who had roused such anger in the priests, and falling asleep was haunted in her dreams by His brave and stricken face, ever reproaching her. She could not rest until she had warned her husband. Pilate was more eager than ever to set this prisoner free, and now tried a cruel but cunning way. He commanded Him to be scourged, hoping thus to move the multitude to pity.

The soldiers were nothing loath. Here was a fine plaything to their hand. They fastened Him to a column, and scourged Him with leather thongs. Having plaited a crown of thorns, they pressed it cruelly on His brow, and cast a purple robe about Him. They shouted, “Hail, King of the Jews!” and struck Him with their fists, and smote Him with a reed.

When they had wrought their worst, Jesus



THE SCOURGING OF JESUS.

From the Picture by Velasquez in the National Gallery, London.

was brought to the gateway, where all could see Him with His spiked circlet and imperial robe. Then cried Pilate, "Behold the Man!" It was indeed the Man of men, the Hero of heroes, calm and brave and upright as ever, though loaded with insults and weak with pain. The priests saw His spirit was unbroken, and before a wave of pity could sweep the crowd, cried, "Crucify, Crucify." There are ever some like tigers in a city crowd, who go mad at the sight of blood, and such as those cried, until the whole assembly joined them, "The cross, the cross."

Pilate was foiled again, and in his anger and distress turned upon the chief priests and said, "Take Him yourselves and crucify Him; for I find no crime in Him." The Jews answered, "We have a law, and by that law He ought to die, because He made Himself the Son of God." He would have heeded these words little at the beginning of the trial, but now, with his wife's message in his ears, and beholding the noble bearing of Jesus, he became the more afraid, and turned back once more to speak with the prisoner privately.

The Jews, now desperate, cried, "If thou release this man, thou art not Cæsar's friend: every one

that maketh himself a king, speaketh against Cæsar." Pilate knew the charge was false. But his sins and weakness made him a coward. He dared not suffer examination by the Roman Emperor, therefore he dared not infuriate the Jews. He saw a tumult rising, and was deafened by the wild-beast cry, "Crucify, Crucify." He resisted no longer. His chair of judgment was set out upon the pavement of parti-coloured tiles, and there, in the bright sunlight, he condemned Jesus to the death of the cross. But first he took water and washed his hands before the people, saying, "I am innocent of the blood of this righteous man; see ye to it." The by-standers shouted, "His blood be on us, and on our children." Then Jesus was delivered over to their cruel will.

The long trial was ended. The priests were triumphant. The people still surged through the streets, scarcely knowing what they had done. Pilate cursed these ungovernable Jews, and said to himself, "I at least am innocent."

But disgrace and doom had fallen on them all. Pilate could not escape just punishment by simply washing his hands. In a few years he was deprived of his proud position. The people had rejected

their Deliverer, and rejecting Him, rejected God. The councillors had finally sold themselves to the Prince of Evil.

When Jerusalem fell less than half a century later, and thousands upon thousands perished in its ruins, the greatness of their sin was written plainly for all men to see.

CHAPTER XLV

HOW JESUS DIED

It was now nearly high noon. The sun looked down on the darkest sight ever seen on earth. The eager enemies of Jesus lost no time in taking this pure and precious life. Scarcely had Pilate disappeared within his palace than the sad procession set out to the place of death outside the walls, the triumphant priests at its head.

To heap further scorn on Jesus, were that possible, two evildoers who were to meet the same cruel death walked by Him. The Roman soldiers with hammer and nails and spade surrounded Him, but they were too proud to carry the disgraceful cross. Its two beams were laid on the weary, blood-stained shoulders of Jesus, as if He were an abject criminal. The excited people thronged the streets and crowded along the

highway which led to Golgotha, the place of a skull.

As Jesus staggered on, weighed down by the wood on which He was to hang, the soldiers saw His steps falter, and fearing He would fall ere He reached the place of execution, they seized a countryman coming into the city and laid on him the cross. We do not know if this man shrank with loathing from such a disgrace, but we bless his name, for he was the only one to help our Saviour on the Sorrowful Way.

Yet all hearts were not as hard as the priests'. Some women by the wayside, perhaps remembering the kindnesses they had seen Jesus do, wept at this pitiable sight. It was too horrible. But Jesus turned on them His pitying eyes, which had wept over Jerusalem so shortly before, and said, "Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for Me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children." In the midst of His own suffering He thought of the suffering of the sacred city when the Romans would level it with the ground, and the streets would run with blood.

When they had come to the place, the soldiers stripped Jesus of His garments, and nailed His

hands and feet to the cross. And as the hammer smote the nails, and the sharp points pierced His flesh, He prayed, "Father, forgive them ; for they know not what they do." Then they raised the cross and placed it in the hole they had dug, and lifted Him on high where all eyes could see Him. The like they did for the two robbers at His side ; one was placed on either hand—a vain effort to convince men that Jesus was as wicked as they. Then, heedless of His sufferings, the soldiers divided His garments, and cast their dice to see who should possess His seamless robe. And they set above His head a tablet, with the words "THE KING OF THE JEWS" written in Greek and Latin and the language of the country, so that all might read. This bitter jibe was Pilate's poor revenge upon the priests and rulers. Some of them hurried to him, indignant that this sufferer should be called their king, and begged the Governor to change the inscription. But he would not.

The cruel work was over now, but Jesus was not left in peace. With tongues sharper than the nails, men assailed Him. The soldiers with unfeeling mockery cried, "If Thou art the King of the Jews, save Thyself." And passers-by came

and stared at Him, and wagged their heads, and insulted Him in His misery, saying, "Ah, Thou that destroyest the Temple, and buildest it in three days, save Thyself, and come down from the cross." Worst of all, the scribes and rulers reviled Him, and stood beneath His cross, gloating over Him, and saying: "He saved others; Himself He cannot save. Let Christ the King of Israel descend now from the cross, that we may see and believe." And those that were crucified with Him, reviled Him too.

Jesus heard all the bitter words. The soldiers had offered Him a draught which might have stupefied Him and blunted the pain a little. But He refused it. He wished to die with His mind quite clear; for He had much to do in His death-hour. Indeed His death was His last great deed, the greatest of all deeds.

Near the cross stood Mary, His mother. Alas for her! The sword was piercing her heart now as prophesied so many years before. Beside her waited her sister and Mary Magdalene and John the beloved disciple. Three women and but one man watched with Jesus through these dreary hours, though others gazed from afar. As Jesus

looked upon His mother's pallid, tear-stained face, marked with unspeakable sorrow, He was mindful of her need. He knew that she could not be at rest in the care of His brothers, who had not believed on Him. He knew also that He could ask anything from this disciple who loved Him best. In fewest words, He commended His mother to John's care, saying to her, "Woman, behold thy son!" and to him, "Behold thy mother!" From that hour the disciple took her unto his own home. Jesus gave her not only a home, but a son who would love and cherish her, as the mother of his dear Master.

And now one great joy came to Jesus in the midst of mockery and anguish and bitter parting. One of the thieves had soon ceased to speak insulting words. He had heard before of this Jesus, perhaps had listened to Him one day upon the hillside in Galilee. He may have heard that tender call, "Come unto Me, all ye that are weary and heavy laden." As the minutes passed, his own evil life stood out black before him, and he thought again of God and of the lessons of his youth, and the wild hope woke in his heart that this man was really the God-sent Messiah, who could pardon as

earthly kings do, and was going to a kingdom on the other side of death.

Just then his companion broke out into fresh reproaches against Jesus, saying, "Art not Thou the Christ? Save Thyself and us." But the penitent thief rebuked his comrade, saying, "We indeed are condemned justly, for we receive the due reward of our deeds; but this man hath done nothing amiss." The curses died away, and there was silence until the robber spoke once more. He had heard Jesus praying for the forgiveness of the executioners. He saw how pitiful He was, and that even on the cross He bore Himself as a lord of men. The nearness of death cleared the eyes which sin had blinded, and gave the robber faith and courage to pray, "Jesus, remember me when Thou comest in Thy kingdom."

Jesus was ready to welcome this sin-stained soul and said, "Verily I say unto thee, To-day shalt thou be with Me in Paradise." *Paradise!* it was a word the rough robber could understand; not the Jewish word for heaven, but a word meaning originally fair garden ground, with fruits and crystal streams and shady groves, and afterwards used to describe the place of the blessed.

So the Saviour won a follower in His own death-hour. The man was poor, and had nothing to offer save a sorrowful heart and a child's trust. His hands were pierced, and they could never serve Jesus; his feet could never go his Master's messages; he had nothing but the ashes of a mis-spent life and a penitent heart to give. Yet he entered into the kingdom, while respectable men went into the great dark because they would not commit themselves to Jesus, and trusted in themselves.

The sky had been rapidly darkening, and was now entirely hid by scowling clouds which hung over Jerusalem like a funeral pall. But a worse darkness was gathering over the soul of Jesus. He had done all that He could for those near Him—praying for His executioners, providing for His mother, saving the soul of the thief crucified at His side; but the end was not yet.

No one can know through what experiences our dear Lord passed as the dark minutes dragged by. But at last there broke from His lips the hoarse whisper, "Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?" *i.e.* "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" It is like the cry from a traveller who has

long vanished from our sight, down a dark ravine, telling us of a great horror and anguish we cannot understand.

But this we know. It was not the rending of His flesh, nor His nation's hatred of Him, nor the inhuman mockery of the by-standers, which wrested that cry from Him. He felt in that dread hour that He had lost His Father in heaven, whom He had always felt perfectly near to Him, without a shadow of a cloud between. Now He reached forth the hand of His soul, and there was no Father's hand to meet it; He sought the Father's face, but found only the empty darkness; He cried for the Father's help, and no answer came. He felt forsaken, desolate, utterly alone.

Why did the Father who loved Him with a love we cannot imagine, suffer His Beloved to feel thus forsaken? It was not because Jesus was less dear to the Father; it was not because Jesus had failed in one detail to be holy as God is holy; it was because of our sins, which He was confessing and bearing in His body. He was the true Pass-over Lamb, a perfect sacrifice for all our misdoings. For us the blessing; for Him the shame and horror and blackness of death before death came.

The end was very near now, but before Jesus died He spoke yet thrice. Some of the people had not understood the words, "Eloi, Eloi," and thought He was crying out for Elijah to deliver Him. With straining eyes they watched in the gloom to see what would happen. Just then Jesus moaned, "I thirst." So long as He had work to do for others He thought not of His bodily pain, but now when all was done that He had come to do upon the cross, He felt a burning thirst, and told men of His need. One, kinder than the others, filled a sponge with vinegar, and placing it on a reed, held it to His lips. The others cried, "Let be, let us see if Elijah will come."

It scarcely mattered whether His thirst was relieved or not, for soon He said, "It is finished." Not only the suffering and the darkness and the desolation, but the great work He had come to do—*finished*. He had done all that needed to be done, and what we could never do, to make forgiveness sure for all who seek it in His name. In that dark hour He wrought a perfect work.

Now He felt that His Father was with Him again. All the clouds upon His soul rolled away, and He breathed out His last sigh in words of



Eyre & Spottiswoode.

THE CRUCIFIXION.

From the Picture by Van Dyck in the Museum, Antwerp.

perfect restfulness, "Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit." Jesus was dead. His enemies' lust for His blood was satisfied, but the world was saved.

The order was given later to break the legs of the crucified, that they might die speedily and be removed from the cross; for the Jews, though willing to slay the innocent, thought that if the dead bodies remained hanging through the Sabbath Day, it would be polluted. But when the soldiers came to Jesus, they saw that He was already dead. One soldier, to make sure, thrust his spear into Jesus side, and blood and water flowed out. It was as if His heart had broken in the extremity of anguish. The centurion in charge of the soldiers had sat motionless on his horse all through these hours of darkness. He neither mocked nor restrained the mockers, but remained deep in thought. He had never seen such a sufferer or such a death before. When all was over, he said, "Truly this was a son of God." He felt that no mere man could have shown such love and died in such calm as Jesus.

His dear body was not cast by careless hands into a common grave. Joseph of Arimathæa, a rich man and a secret disciple, healed in that hour

of his cowardice, boldly demanded the body ; and Nicodemus, who had once visited Jesus by night, now declared himself also the friend of the dead. Although one of the councillors, Nicodemus brought spices, so that Jesus might be buried as an honoured man, according to Eastern customs. Then, as the night was falling, the two laid His torn and broken body in a new tomb in Joseph's garden, where the fresh spring flowers were blooming.

A great stone was rolled against the door of the cave ; and the priests had it sealed, and their servants guarded it, fearing lest the disciples of Jesus should steal His body, and pretend that He had come to life.

The enemies of Jesus thought that they had conquered, and that they would never be troubled by the Nazarene again. His broken-spirited disciples thought also that their Master was finally defeated. But He had really conquered. It was His love and not the nails which held Him to the cross. His love, and the love of the Father who gave Him to this death, needed no further proof. And Sin, His own great enemy, has been once for all unmasked. It was robbed of its false glory when it slew perfect Love.



Bregi.

THE DESCENT FROM THE CROSS.

From the Picture by Fra Bartolommeo in the Pitti Gallery, Florence.

So the cross is the throne of Jesus. It is the wounds in hands and feet and side, the signs of His agony of soul, which win men all the world over to be His servants.

Thus the words of the Baptist were proved true. Jesus was the Lamb that took away the sin of the world. Never another sacrifice needed to be offered. The young of the flocks are never laid upon the altar now. The lesson they taught, the hope they promised, were both perfected in Jesus' death.

All in the April evening
April airs were abroad ;
The sheep with their little lambs
Passed me by on the road.

The lambs were weary, and crying
With a weak, human cry ;
I thought on the Lamb of God
Going meekly to die.

Up in the blue, blue mountains
Dewy pastures were sweet ;
Rest for the little bodies,
Rest for the little feet.

But for the Lamb of God,
Up on the hilltop green,
Only a Cross of Shame,
Two stark crosses between.¹

¹ Katharine Tynan.

CHAPTER XLVI

THE RISEN JESUS : CHANGED YET THE SAME

ALL was still in the garden of Joseph through the long Sabbath Day. The guard sat among the flowers, and idly watched the great stone with the priestly seal upon it. They were quite undisturbed. Only at dusk they saw some women in the distance, who lingered for a little, gazing through the gathering gloom at the sepulchre. Night drew on, and the soldiers grew more alert ; but as hour after hour of darkness passed with scarcely a sound, they grew heavy and weighted with sleep.

Suddenly an earthquake shook the ground on which they lay ; the rending of the rocks deafened them ; and a radiant form, with raiment white as snow, dazzled their sleepy eyes as if by a flash of lightning. As they looked on him, they saw that



Alinari.

THE RESURRECTION.

From the Picture by Perugino in the Vatican, Rome.

he was seated on the stone which had closed the tomb, and peering through the dark entrance, they saw that the body of Jesus had vanished from the ledge on which it rested.

It was but a hurried glance, and they dared not look again. In the presence of that awful figure from another world they lay trembling and swooned away. When they came to themselves, they hastened to tell their strange story to the councillors who had commanded them to keep watch. These rulers were dismayed at this news, for they knew not what it might mean. Clearly, Jesus' mysterious power endured after He was dead.

But at all costs the story must be kept from the people's ears. Giving large sums of money to the soldiers to buy their silence, the distracted councillors bade them say that while they slept, the tomb was rifled. "But if it reach the Governor's ears?" asked the soldiers. "We will persuade him," was the answer, "and rid you of all care." These blinded men would not admit that they were fighting against God. They thought by lies and bribes to cripple the unseen Powers.

The women, who had come to see the tomb at

sunset on the Sabbath, went to prepare to do the last sad offices for their dead Master, either not knowing of the kindly deed of Joseph and Nicodemus, or desiring to complete it. Very early, while it was yet dark, they rose, and, laden with spices and ointments, stole through the quiet streets to the garden outside the walls. But Mary Magdalene, younger than the others, outstripped them in her eagerness, and reached the garden alone. One glance convinced her that the tomb had been opened. Without waiting to learn what had really happened, sure that the dear body of her Lord had been stolen, she ran to the lodging of Peter, and then to John, and gasped, "They have taken away the Lord out of the sepulchre, and we know not where they have laid Him."

Without delay, Peter and John hurried forth, and ran far in front of Mary. John reached the place first, and stooping down, he looked in and saw the linen clothes lying; but he did not venture in. He knew not what to think.

When Peter came, he did not hesitate, but entered through the low doorway, John now following him. The body was indeed gone, but the linen clothes were lying there, and in one

place the napkin which had bound His head, carefully folded and by itself. When John saw this, he knew that it had not been robbers in haste and fear who had opened the tomb, and the faith awoke that his Master had risen indeed. But he was not sure enough to speak, and neither of them lingered. They turned homewards, leaving Mary Magdalene alone at the entrance to the sepulchre.

She was bowed with sorrow, and could not tear herself away. Was nothing to be left of Him to whom she owed all? As she thought that she could never see His face again, or even touch His hand in the coldness of death, she broke into a passion of weeping. And as she wept, blindly hoping that somehow it was all a mistake, she stooped down and looked into the sepulchre. It was not empty now. Two angels in white garments were sitting there, one where the head of Jesus had rested, and one where His pierced feet had lain. She was too startled to speak, but they asked her, in words she could understand, "Woman, why weepest thou?" She repeated her sad plaint, "Because they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid Him."

Just then, feeling that some one was behind her, she turned and saw a man whom she took to be the gardener, for she was half-blinded by her tears. He spoke, and His voice was more sweet and gentle than that of the angels, "Woman, why weepest thou? whom seekest thou?" Encouraged by the kind words, she cried, "Sir, if thou hast borne Him hence, tell me where thou hast laid Him, and I will take Him away." She waited eagerly for an answer, but instead she heard but one word, "Mary!" As her name, spoken in well-remembered tones, fell upon her ears, in one flash she knew what had happened. Her beloved Master was alive again, and at her side now. Swiftly turning to Him, she flung herself at His feet, but one happy word on her lips, "Rabboni!" that is to say, "Master!" That horrible nightmare was past. He was not dead. He was not lost to her. He was here, a living man once more.

She was about to fling her arms round His feet and kiss them in her passionate affection, when Jesus said, "Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended unto My Father." She thought that He had come back to the old life, to be always

with His friends as before. But He taught her that it was not by clinging to Him she could continue to know His living presence, for He was soon to ascend. She must learn to have Him always with her in another fashion. But lest her tender heart should be wounded, He added at once, "Go to My brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto My Father, and your Father; and to My God, and your God"; thus making her the first messenger of the glad news.

Thus our risen Lord revealed Himself, to a woman, before all others,—to a woman in her tears and loneliness. His first deed showed that, though changed and freed from the life of earth, He was the same in His tenderness and pity and friendliness to the desolate. What would you think His first words would have been? A shout of triumph, or a message of judgment against the guilty city, or a command to His apostles to go forth and win the world? Nay. His first words were to a woman, and but a whisper, "Why weepest thou?" How sure we may be that although our Saviour is now within the circle of the hallelujahs, He hears our sighs, and counts our tears, and knows us one by one.

He doth give His joy to all,
He becomes an Infant small,
He becomes a Man of Woe,
He doth feel the sorrow too.

Think not thou canst sigh a sigh,
And thy Maker is not by ;
Think not thou canst weep a tear,
And thy Maker is not near.

But Mary Magdalene was not the only messenger of joy to the apostles that morning. The other women who had followed more slowly to the tomb brought like news. As they came, they wondered how they could move the heavy stone; but when they drew near, behold the stone had been dragged away, and on it sat the angel whose face was dazzling as a lightning flash. As they stood trembling before him, he said :

“Fear not ye: for I know that ye seek Jesus, which was crucified. He is not here: for He is risen, as He said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay: and go quickly, and tell His disciples that He is risen from the dead; and, behold, He goeth before you into Galilee; there shall ye see Him: lo, I have told you.”

They did not wait a moment, but hastened

from the sepulchre. Still trembling with fear, yet full of joy, they ran to bring the disciples word.

Another party of women had started for the sepulchre a little later. They, too, found it empty, but saw no angel seated on the stone. They were standing perplexed, for they had not heard their sisters' glad tidings, when two men in dazzling apparel appeared at their side. The women were affrighted, and falling to the ground, hid their faces. Then the angels—for they were angels—said :

“Why seek ye the living among the dead? He is not here, but is risen : remember how He spake unto you when He was yet in Galilee, saying, The Son of Man must be delivered up into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again.”

The women remembered these words, and how they had been perplexed by such a saying. Immediately they, too, turned to bring the disciples news.

But though the women brought such glad tidings, the disciples, dispirited and sunk in gloom, did not believe. Idle tales, they said.

The women restlessly set forth for the tomb again. On the way, suddenly their eyes brightened, for who should meet them but Jesus Himself. "All hail!" He said. Speechless, they fell at his feet and embraced them, and worshipped Him. Then Jesus spoke again, kind and encouraging His words: "Fear not: go tell My brethren that they depart into Galilee, and there shall they see Me."

Now every doubt was gone. What a glad gathering came together in the upper room! Mary Magdalene had seen the Lord. Other women had met Him in the way. Some of them had heard the message of the angels. Peter and John had seen the empty tomb. Joy, joy, joy! Their eyes, dim with weeping, shone for gladness. The hideous scenes of Friday were forgotten. They could not eat or separate. Again and again the wonderful story had to be told.

In all hearts a fear mingled with their joy. They felt that they had never yet understood their Master, or given Him all the honour that was His due. Now they knew Him to be Lord of the grave and King of men. But their joy was greater than their fear. It was as if heaven had come to earth; as if in one short hour, winter had been

changed to spring. How their hearts sang : “ For, lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone ; the flowers appear on the earth ; the time of the singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtle is heard in our land.”

CHAPTER XLVII

WHAT JESUS SAID TO THE TWO FRIENDS

THAT same afternoon two men left the crowded city and turned their steps towards Emmaus, a village which lay nearly eight miles away to the north-west.

It was a glorious spring day, bright flowers covered the stony earth, and the voice of hope was in the air; but they walked with downcast faces, talking in mournful tones. They were disciples of Jesus, but did not belong to the inner circle of the apostles. Like the rest of our Lord's friends, they had lost all hope at His death, and the news they had heard that morning of the empty tomb had only perplexed them, for they had not been told that Jesus Himself had appeared. Ill at ease and restless, they set out for a long quiet walk to the village where one of them had his home. They

were great friends, and it was a relief to both of them to be able to interchange all their fears and anxieties and disappointments.

Deep in conversation, they were unaware of another at their side, until He said, "What words are these that ye exchange one with another as ye walk?" Although the question was so direct, it was asked with such a kind and engaging air, that they were not offended. For the moment they could not answer, for their sorrow rose up afresh before them in all its darkness. They stood still, looking sad, until one of them, by name Cleopas, said, "Dost thou alone sojourn in Jerusalem, and not know the things which are come to pass there in these days?"

I do not know whether they did more than glance at their questioner, but they did not recognise Him. It was Jesus who had spoken to them; but all the lines of pain and marks of grief had been smoothed from His face, and their own eyes were heavy with sorrow. Besides, He did not wish them to know Him at once, and their eyes were holden. For He wished to teach them what the Scriptures had said concerning Himself, and while they were sad and anxious they were more

ready to learn. So He did not reveal Himself to them, but asked, in answer to Cleopas, "What things?"

Then they both poured out their sad story: how Jesus of Nazareth had been a great prophet,—mighty in deed and word, and how the chief priests and rulers had delivered Him up to be condemned to death and to be crucified. And though their companion seemed a perfect stranger to them, there was something so sympathetic about Him, that they added, "But we hoped that it was He which should redeem Israel."

"And this is not all," they went on to say; "it is now the third day, and certain women of our company made us astonished. They were early at the sepulchre, and found not His body, but came, saying, that they had seen a vision of angels, which said He was alive. And certain of them with us went to the tomb, and found it even so as the women had said; but"—and again their voices broke with their sorrow—"Him they saw not." That was all they could say. Disaster, confusion, uncertainty,—it seemed to them.

But their companion's voice roused even their

dull and weary souls. His words were like a trumpet-call, for He said to them: "O foolish men, and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! Was it not right and necessary for the Christ to suffer these things, and to enter into His glory?" Then He began to go through all the Old Testament, beginning with the earliest books, and pointed out how many of the passages referring to the Messiah hinted or stated that He must pass through suffering to victory.

The two friends listened with delight and increasing hope. It was as if a veil was lifted from the ancient writings. They had never understood them before. Now they were new books. It was plain that what had happened to Jesus was really a fulfilment of prophetic words, and not one long horrible mistake. The two friends grew more and more cheerful, and reached the village with bright eyes and free step.

As they halted at their own door, Jesus prepared to say farewell. But they could not think of letting this new Teacher leave them so soon. They urged Him to stay, saying, "Abide with us; for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent."

Then He went in with them. The swift twilight passed ere they sat down to their evening meal. The lamp lit the table cheerily, and the best of their humble store was set before their fellow-traveller, whom they put in the place of honour at its head. He took the loaf, and blessed it, and brake, and gave to them.

In a flash their eyes were opened. It was Jesus Himself! Either they saw the marks of the nails in His holy hands as He broke the bread, or the familiar tones and words of His blessing had awakened the memory of past days when He had presided at some simple feast. However it was, they knew Him. But in the moment of recognition, He vanished from their sight. The seat at the head of the table was empty, yet in their hands was the bread He had given them. Looking at each other with glad surprise, they said, "Was not our heart burning within us, while He spake to us on the way, while He opened to us the Scriptures?"

But they could not rest until they had shared their glad news. Rising from their scarcely tasted meal, they hurried off through the dark, retracing the road they had just come. They thought not



THE SUPPER WITH THE TWO.

From the Picture by Palma Vecchio in the Pitti Gallery, Florence.

of weariness nor of the distance. Had they not seen the Lord face to face ?

They knew well where to seek the apostles, and found them; together with the rest of the followers of Jesus. One glance at the company's faces told the travellers that the good news had already been told. As soon as they entered, a dozen voices cried, "The Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared to Simon." Jesus had sought out Peter alone, to hear his bitter confession of denial and shame. There was fuller joy on Peter's face than on any other. So the two comrades need not have hurried back ; but how glad they were to be in the circle of rejoicing friends, to tell their story and to hear the stories of others, and to mingle their cries and tears of joy !

In this fashion the glorious risen Lord spent the first afternoon of His resurrection life, walking the rough ways with two private friends of His, while the dust of the common road clung to His raiment. It is not only to those in high place and busy with great work that He makes Himself known, but to the loyal and true-hearted of His people, however humble their names. And wherever two true friends walk together, who are friends of His

and speak of Him, He, too, is with them, causing their hearts to burn with glad thoughts of His love, and to grow tender with the sweet sense of His presence.

CHAPTER XLVIII

THE RISEN LORD AMONGST HIS FRIENDS

WHEN the two friends from Emmaus came to the door of the house where the apostles and their companions were gathered, they were not admitted at once, for the windows were closely barred and the entrance secured. When their knocking was heard, some within turned pale, for almost all the followers of Jesus who were in Jerusalem were together—perhaps in the upper room where Jesus had eaten the last supper, and they feared lest the Jews should come by night and with one swoop carry them all to prison. It was with a sigh of relief that the apostles learnt who the new-comers were, and as soon as they were admitted, the doors were locked again for safety.

Scarcely had Cleopas and his comrade told their story, when all started back afraid, for there in

their midst stood Jesus Himself. No door had been opened, no footfall had been heard, and yet He was among them. They thought it was the ghost of their Master, for they did not as yet know that the risen body of their Lord was different from the old. At once He greeted them with the familiar greeting, which was used thousands of times every day in the streets of Jerusalem, "Peace be unto you." As they still panted and trembled with fear, He said :

"Why are ye troubled? and wherefore do reasonings arise in your hearts? See My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself: handle Me, and see; for a ghost hath not flesh and bones, as ye behold Me to have."

Then He showed them His hands and His feet, and in them were seen the marks of the nails. But for very joy they could not believe that it was really their Master. They gazed on Him, wondering and silent, so He said, "Have ye here anything to eat?" They gave Him a piece of broiled fish and a honey-comb; and He ate before them. Then their fears left them, and they rejoiced exceedingly.

You must not think that the angels and our

beloved in heaven need to eat as we do to preserve life ; but our Lord was not yet ascended to heaven, and His body was not yet fully prepared for the spiritual Home. He was between earth and heaven. He could pass through closed doors as if they were open, for His body was changed ; but also He could eat as He had done before, for His body was not yet wholly changed. So in His thoughtfulness for these dear friends of His, amazed and confounded at His sudden appearing, He ate in their presence, and convinced them that the grave had not destroyed His body, but only set it free for new uses, and made it more beautiful than before. Therefore we need no longer fear death if we are the friends of Jesus.

It is as if your mother wished you to enter a dark passage in some unknown castle. You shrink back, for no ray of light pierces its pitchy blackness. Then she enters alone, and vanishes from your sight. You listen until her last footfall dies away, and wait in terror as minute after minute passes. But at last she returns, quite unharmed, rested and refreshed, and tells you that the dark corridor leads into a sunlit garden, full of fragrant flowers and singing birds, and there in her hands is a nosegay

of fair colours and sweet scents. Your fears vanish, for you have *seen* your mother enter the darkness and return unhurt and gladdened.

Our Lord has gone into the dark corridor of the grave from which all men shrank. He has returned, revealing in His peaceful face and glad words how fair the world to which it leads. Perhaps we could not have believed His words, but now He has *shown* us that death is only sleep—the deepest and sweetest sleep that ever falls upon our eyes.

When all His friends were once more quiet and at peace, Jesus began to remind them how He had said that all things which were written of Him in the law of Moses, and in the Prophets, and in the Psalms must needs be fulfilled. He opened their mind, so that they could understand the real meaning of the words they had so often heard. Then He said to them again, “Peace be unto you: as the Father hath sent Me, even so send I you.” It was as if a draught of ice-cold refreshing water was poured down the throat of men dizzy with the glare and heat of noontide sun. They felt strangely calm and brave. An hour ago they had been cowering behind locked doors afraid of the

Jews; already they felt in some degree prepared to meet not only Jews but men of every nation.

As Jesus saw their quiet but eager faces, He breathed on them and said, "Receive ye the Holy Spirit. Whose soever sins ye forgive, they are forgiven unto them; whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained." These words were spoken not only to the apostles, but to the women and the private friends of Jesus with the apostles.

He did not mean that they could forgive wicked men who did not repent, or that they could prevent those who were really sorry for their sins from being forgiven. But oftentimes those who have really turned away from evil things and have begun to trust in our Saviour, are afraid to rest and be glad in His great promises; and Jesus taught His people that it was right for them to go to such trembling but honest hearts and say, "Rejoice, for you are indeed forgiven." Also, some who are still wicked at heart feel a false peace, and think they are forgiven, while they are still without the kingdom. Jesus taught His friends that the Holy Spirit would guide them to go to such and say, "You are still in your sins; repent that you may be truly pardoned."

But one of the apostles was not there when Jesus revealed Himself to His friends. Thomas, who as you will remember was of a sad and gloomy nature, had not gathered with the rest. He had heard the tidings of the women, but would not believe. "No," he thought; "it is useless to try and persuade me. He is dead, and we shall never see Him again. Can the grave give up its own?" So he stayed apart in sad loneliness.

The other apostles now hastened to Him and said, "We have seen the Lord." But he only answered, "Except I shall see in His hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe."

How slowly that week dragged on! Every evening, I think, the disciples gathered together, and some of them always brought Thomas, but nothing happened. They waited late, but their dear Master came not. Thomas grew more and more gloomy, and the apostles sometimes almost despaired of seeing him share their joyous trust. At last it was once more the first day of the week. They were gathered as before, and the doors were shut. Suddenly Jesus stood in their midst, and

spoke again the common greeting, which sounded like words from heaven on His lips, "Peace be unto you." Then turning at once to Thomas He said :

"Reach hither thy finger, and see My hands ; and reach hither thy hand, and put it into My side : and be not faithless, but believing."

As Thomas heard the very words he had used, and beheld the pierced hand stretched forth, all his unbelief fled ; he was only ashamed and distressed. At one bound, his mind mounted to the furthest height of faith, and he answered, "My Lord and my God." Jesus, Conqueror over the grave and Hearer of His hidden thoughts, was more to Him than Teacher, Master, Friend, or Saviour ; He was God.

The Lord did not rebuke His disciple for these words, as He must have done had they been untrue, but said gently, yet sadly, "Because thou hast seen Me, thou hast believed : blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed."

Now you can understand better why we are so sure that our Saviour did really rise from the dead. None of His friends expected Him to return ; some of His best friends were very slow to believe

that so great a miracle could have happened. Thomas was so full of doubt, that he had given up all hope, even though his comrades told him that they themselves had seen their risen Lord. Nothing save His own dear presence could have given these hopeless, doubting men the glad certainty that their Master was indeed once more alive.

It was because they heard His voice with their own ears, and were able to devour His face with their eager eyes, that they became so sure. Every trace of sorrow and weariness had fled, but the marks of the nails and of the thorns could still be traced. They were not deceived. He was no shadow, nor pale ghost, nor passing angel; He was their living, well-known Lord.



Delant.

THE UNBELIEF OF THOMAS.

From the Picture by Rubens in the Gallery, Antwerp.

CHAPTER XLIX

THE RISEN SAVIOUR BY THE LAKE

IT was dusk by the Lake of Galilee. Sitting near the water's edge were nine of the apostles—Peter and James, and John and Thomas, and some others. They were gazing listlessly over the waves on which they had spent so many toilsome nights. Boat after boat hoisted sail and furrowed its way towards the fishing-grounds. Still they sat idle.

Day after day for more than a week the same little company had lingered in their old familiar haunts. They were restless, and a look of expectancy was always on their faces. How came they there? They were waiting to meet with their Lord. He had appointed them a gathering-place in Galilee, where most of His disciples lived. Therefore they had left Jerusalem and returned

for a little to their own homes. But since they re-entered Galilee, Jesus had made no sign. He appeared to have vanished. They had no work to do. All seemed uncertain.

This was intentional on their Master's part. He wished to throw them back on their own thoughts, so that they might think and think again of this great wonder which had come into their lives, and was at last made clear to their astonished minds. God in human form had accompanied with them for three years. Him they called their Master, they must learn to know as very God. Jesus sought also to train them to trust Him when unseen, for soon the veil of the invisible would hide Him altogether from their eyes, and they would then be able to know Him only in their hearts.

But they were still weak. Now that they were back by the lake, with the sound of its waves in their ears, and the wind singing through the cordage of the masts, the past months were a little like a dream. Even the appearances of their risen Lord were fading from the memories of some of them. They grew weary of thought, and their old work allured them. Perhaps their store of money

was running low. The thought had crossed them, Would they have to take to fishing again?

The boat that Peter used to sail lay unused upon the beach. Suddenly he sprang to his feet and said abruptly, "I go a-fishing." The others had been waiting for the word, and answered eagerly, "We also go with thee." In a trice the vessel was launched, the sail hoisted, and they were scudding before the breeze in the wake of the last boat just vanishing in the gloom. Soon the nets were let down, and all that night they toiled. Again and again they tried new ground, and set their nets with all their skill. But they caught nothing—not a fish. As the darkness grew grey, they headed for the land, and in the dawn drew near the shore.

One wonders what their thoughts were. They had not meant to disobey their Master, and yet He had told them to leave their nets and to become fishers of men. For the first time for more than two years they had gone back to their old work, as if they were to be fishermen on the lake again.

On the lake-shore stood a solitary figure, half-hidden by the morning mist. His greeting came

across the waves as He cried, "Children, have ye aught to eat?" It was a friendly voice, although it seemed a stranger who spoke; but they answered shortly and wearily, "No." Again He called, "Cast the net on the right side of the boat, and ye shall find."

The boat was scarcely one hundred yards from the shore. Had this by-stander seen a shoal of fish lying there? or did memory awaken, until they thought of that other night of fruitless fishing, when a like command brought them a full net? Could this unknown friend upon the shore be the Lord? Without hesitation they cast their net, and in a moment every muscle was tense, as they felt the weight increase and saw the flashing of a thousand fins in the water, which had seemed quite clear. The net had enclosed a multitude of fishes.

John, the disciple whom Jesus loved, and who understood his Master best, knew at once who the seeming stranger was. He whispered to Peter, "It *is* the Lord." The Lord! Oh, glad word! Peter cast his coat about him, for he was stripped to the waist, and plunged impulsively into the water to reach the shore at once. The others followed more slowly in the little boat they had been



Figure 3. Spillaxroute.

THE MIRACULOUS DRAUGHT OF FISHES.

From the Picture by Gaspard de Crayer in the Brussels Gallery.

towing at the stern, and brought the net full of fishes to the shore. There they saw a fire of glowing charcoal—a welcome sight in the chill morning air, and on the hot coals a meal of broiled fish was being prepared, and bread lay to their hand. Jesus said to them, “Bring of the fish which ye have now taken.”

Simon Peter, ever foremost, went aboard the boat and drew the net to land. It was full of great fishes. They counted them—one hundred and fifty and three. Then Jesus said, “Come and break your fast.” They gathered round the fire, and He Himself gave them the bread and fish. Their hunger was keen, but it was shyness that kept them silent. They knew it was the Lord, for they could see His pierced hands as He supplied their wants. Yet He was not the same as when in former days He stood upon the shore. He seemed more like an angel than a fellow-man. The glory of God was shining clearly in His face. One word from Him would have laid their last uncertainty to rest, but not the dullest of them dared to ask, “Who art Thou?” Reverence kept them silent, although their Lord had met them in this homely way and was providing for their bodily needs.

In this way Jesus called His apostles back from earthly labour to their high spiritual work. His new miracle spoke two plain truths. Only when they obeyed His guidance could they gain success. If they did His bidding He would provide for their needs. How comforting a picture of our Lord this is! He, though risen from the grave, and needing neither food nor warmth, remembered His servants' lowliest needs, and supplied them.

But it was chiefly for Peter's sake that the ever-watchful Master had met with His apostles. He had already seen Peter alone, so that no ears but His own should hear the heart-broken confession of His warm-hearted but self-confident friend. But yet, although assured of forgiveness, Peter may well have doubted whether he would be allowed to be one of Jesus' helpers in the great work to be done. Now the Master tested him afresh, to see if sweet humility and a steadfast watchfulness had begun to grow in his heart. If worthy, Peter would receive again his old position, and be made once more one of the founders of the kingdom of God.

So when they had broken their fast, the silence was ended by Jesus saying, "Simon, son of Jonas,

lovest thou Me more than these do?" Peter answered, "Yea, Lord, Thou knowest that I care for Thee." It was a very humble reply. He would not boast as in the old days that he loved his Master more than the others. He did not even venture to use the same word for love as Jesus had used, but chose a more homely and humble word. Then said Jesus, "Feed My lambs," that is, the young and weak among My followers, and those most easily guided.

The second time He said, "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou Me?" Peter felt sad that Jesus should seem to doubt what he had said, but answered as meekly as before, "Yea, Lord, Thou knowest that I care for Thee." Then said Jesus, "Tend My sheep," that is, both the young and the old, the strong and the weak.

The third time He asked, "Simon, son of Jonas, *carest* thou for Me?" He took up Peter's homely word, as much as to say, "Are you quite sure of even this humble love?"

When Peter heard the threefold question, he was reminded of his threefold denial, and was filled with grief. He answered, "Lord, Thou knowest all things; Thou perceivest that I care for

Thee." How changed he was from the old Peter, who had said so confidently, "Though all others forsake Thee, yet will not I." He was willing to take the humblest place. "Do not trust my words," he seemed to say; "I know they are not to be trusted; but look in my heart and see if there is not true love there, weak and unworthy though I am." Jesus rejoiced to see the change in His disciple, and said, "Feed My dear sheep." It was like saying, "Take care of My most precious ones. I could not give you nobler work."

Thus the miserable denial of the dark betrayal-night was wiped out, and Peter took his place again among the foremost servants of our Lord. And wherever our Lord's people who have sinned, however shameful their sin, come again to the Saviour, with true sorrow and deep humility, He welcomes them and trusts them afresh. He is the first to blush for our disgrace; He is also the first to hide it from sight. He will search us until all the wounds of memory bleed afresh, but He can heal them with His pierced hand and forgiving smile and ennobling word, "Go, work for Me; feed My sheep."

CHAPTER L

HOW JESUS TOOK FAREWELL

A FEW days after the meeting by the lake-shore, almost all the followers of Jesus assembled at a mountain in Galilee, as He had appointed. They came by twos and threes, and in larger companies, from the cities and villages near at hand, and also from Judæa. Quietly they had left their homes when the summons reached them, and by unfrequented paths they took their way ; for it was only to His own that the risen Lord would make Himself known. No merely curious eyes were to be permitted to look upon Him. No enemies must be present when He marshalled His little army to give them their marching orders for the conquest of the world.

When all had gathered, no fewer than five hundred were present, and into their midst, with-

out a sound or a trace of the path He trod, Jesus came. The whole company fell at His feet and worshipped Him, for He looked the King He was, and a crown of light seemed to encircle His brow. But some doubted. He was so different from their old Master: His face so young and joyous and triumphant. Yet He was the same Lord, filled with love for all men, and with pity for their griefs. He was indeed victor over sin and death and hell; but still the comrade of all faithful souls. When He spoke, none could doubt any longer, for the power of God sounded forth in His words and shone in His eyes.

These were the words He spake to His disciples: "All authority hath been given unto Me in heaven and on earth. Go ye therefore, and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I commanded you: and lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world."

It was the trumpet-call to the great work. How vast a work! This little company to go forth to *all nations*! It was but a drop in the great ocean of mankind. On some lips the command would

have sounded absurd, but spoken by Jesus it was like the voice of many waters—a message from the throne of God.

He had often enchained His hearers. At the beginning of His work it had been said, “He speaketh with authority, and not as the scribes.” Now He spoke as God, for He said, “*All* authority hath been given unto Me in heaven and on earth.” Who dare disobey the All-powerful? And with His command He linked the greatest of His promises: “Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.”

So wherever the messengers of Jesus go, into the dark heathen lands or into the ill-smelling city slums, into the desert of poverty or into the fire of persecution, a fair and glorious Presence goes with them; and if our eyes could pierce the veil of the unseen, we should see the marks of the thorns on His brow, and the marks of the nails in His hands, and the light of unquenchable love in His eyes.

But this was not Jesus' farewell to His apostles. Not in Galilee but in Jerusalem He was to take leave of them. In the sacred city He had given His last testimony, had died and had risen again.

There, at the heart of the whole land, and in the scene of His victory, His messengers could best begin their great work. When forty days had passed since His tomb became empty, He met with the apostles once more in the now well-known upper room.

It was the last time on this earth that their eyes would look into His. They were to be tested finally, for now He was to be withdrawn from their sight for ever. He sought to prepare them for their trial, and commanded them to remain together until they received the great gift of the Holy Ghost, that Comforter and Champion of whom He had spoken. They had felt the Spirit's influence already, like the dew on dry soil, but now the showers, bringing strength and courage and wisdom, were to be granted. For this they must wait.

After these words, He led them forth, and passed through the busy streets, having in some way disguised Himself, so that men could not recognise Him. It was the familiar path across the brook Kedron, and up the slopes of Olivet towards Bethany. When they had gone about a mile, He led them aside into a retired place, hidden

alike from the road and from the village. You can still see little hollows there, screened by trees from curious eyes. In one of these they spoke for the last time.

When they were all gathered round Him, they asked Him, "Lord, wilt Thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?" They were still hoping that by one great stroke He would make Israel the foremost nation in the earth. Their minds were purified, so that they did not long for thrones for themselves, or think of the honours they might win; but they had not yet learned that God's kingdom comes in slowly by the way of the heart.

Jesus answered them gently, "It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in His own power." He bade them cease troubling themselves about things which did not concern them, and turn their thoughts to their far-reaching work. So He went on to say, "Ye shall receive power, after the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto Me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judæa, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost parts of the earth." *Witnesses unto the uttermost parts of the earth.* How strange the words

sounded to that little company of Jews, who were still thinking chiefly of their own nation !

But they had scarcely time to think of their strangeness, for just as He ceased speaking, and raised His hands to bless them, they saw Him rise gently from the ground, as if lifted by unseen wings, and ascend through the bright sunlit air. Their straining eyes followed Him until He reached a low-hung cloud, which passed beneath Him. So He was lost to sight in the act of blessing His beloved.

While the apostles stood gazing steadfastly into the sky, hoping against hope to see Him appear anew, they heard a strange voice at their side. Turning, they saw two men in white apparel, and with angelic faces, who said : “ Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven ? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven.” These were angel-messengers whom Jesus had sent to give comfort and hope to His friends. These words filled them with joy. They turned from the holy spot and took the way to the city. Day after day they gathered together for prayer with all the followers of Jesus ; and



THE ASCENSION.

From the Sculpture by Luca della Robbia in the Duomo, Florence.

every day in the Temple they might have been seen with radiant faces, praising and blessing God.

Are you disappointed that they were not sorry to say good-bye to their dear Master? But what if they never said "Good-bye"? You must have noticed that Jesus did not say farewell to His disciples. His last words were not "Good-bye," but "unto the uttermost parts of the earth." He was indeed still with them as He had promised, although His bodily presence was hidden from them. He was like a general who, having addressed his troops, vanishes from their sight; but not because he forsakes the army—only to direct the battle more wisely from a higher point. The apostles understood this. They knew they had not lost their Saviour, but that the time had come for Him to become the Master and the Saviour of the World. Therefore they rejoiced, for in their last glimpse of Him His pierced hands were uplifted to bless them all.

It is many hundreds of years since any one has seen the Lord Jesus Christ on earth. But He is still near us by His spirit. He loves us all as He loved the poor sinners of Galilee. He watches over us as He watched over Peter. He is still

able to say in the ear of our soul, "Thy sins be forgiven thee." He calls us by our name, if we will but listen, as He called the weeping woman at His grave, saying, "Mary." Jesus is more real than the person most real to you.

There is never a day that He does not think of you. He is waiting to welcome you in the Father's House, as He has welcomed His apostles and martyrs and every humble soul that has yielded to His love and trusted in His grace.

THE END

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